



1998 TELEVISION PREVIEW

What's ahead for Star Trek—plus the fall's hottest new shows

CINESCAPE

ACTION/ADVENTURE/SCIENCE FICTION/MOVIES/TELEVISION/NEW MEDIA

**STAR WARS
VS. STAR TREK**
*Who Rules the
Sci-Fi Universe?*

ALIEN

5



JURASSIC PARK

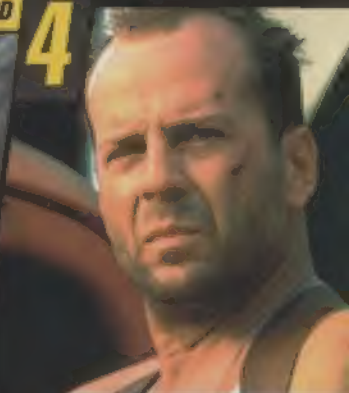
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SUPER SOLDIER
*A Sneak Peek at Kurt
Russell's Action Epic*

DIE HARD

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**MOVIE
PREVIEWS**

*Total Recall 2,
Star Trek 9,
Supernova,
Star Wars
Prequel
and More*

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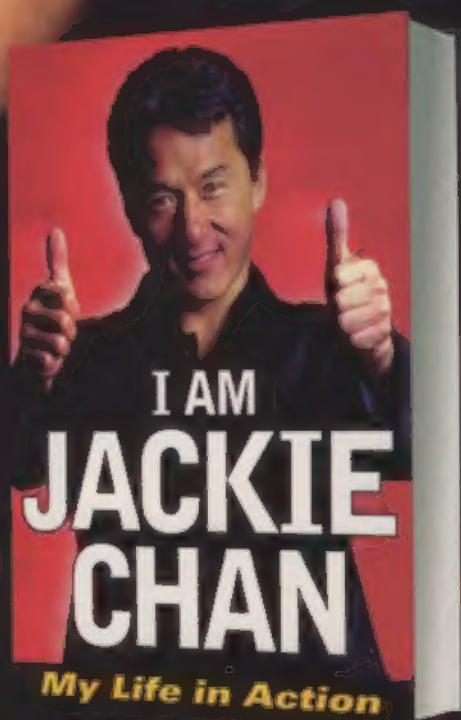
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CINESCOPE

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I don't howl with laughter much. Chortling is more my style. Chuckling feels natural, too. And a good snicker every now and then is pretty satisfying. So for me, a good, hearty, knee-slapping, gut-busting, side-splitting guffaw is a rare thing. But I had one this morning. And I have Mark Altman to thank for it. I had called Mark to ask him what he wanted to write about for this issue's "The Last Word" column. His response had me rolling on the floor.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "I was thinking I might write about why the Sci-Fi Channel sucks."

Such an innocent comment might elicit a raised eyebrow or a knowing smile from some. But it struck a nerve with me. "Yes! That's perfect!" I thought to myself. "That's what it's all about! That's why we're in this business!"

Not that beating up on the nice folks at the Sci-Fi Channel gives us some kind of sick kick. They probably love their children and treat animals kindly and donate generously to important charities. But let's face it: Their channel *does* suck. It's a cable bottom feeder picking over the bones of shows too lame to survive anywhere else. It subsists almost entirely on sci-fi drags like *Buck*

Rogers, *V*, *M.A.N.T.I.S.* and *The Flash*. If it weren't for the relentless playing and replaying of *seaQuest* DSV, it would have to end its broadcast day around 3 in the afternoon.

To be fair, the Sci-Fi Channel isn't entirely worthless. Any channel that offers *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Kojak: The Night Stalker* and *Star Trek* can't be all bad. Some of its sparse original programming is actually quite well-intentioned. And, O.K., I'll admit it—sometimes I enjoy watching brain-eating crap like *Buck Rogers*. But only for about two minutes at a time. And that's only so I can snicker at the form-fitting 1970s space leisure suits and "aliens" who look like Papa Smurf.

But why pick on the Sci-Fi Channel? Because it could be so much better. And it's not going to improve until someone complains. As the old cliché goes, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." Well, there's a lot of squeaking that needs to be done if today's sci-fi and action offerings are going to get better.

So listen up, Sci-Fi Channel. And all you other network suits and studio execs and producers and directors and deal makers better take heed, too.

Squeak. — Steve Hockensmith

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THE EWOKS STRIKE BACK

Last year, *Sci-Fi Universe* published an article titled "50 Reasons Why We Hate *Return of the Jedi*." Then *Scream 2*, an otherwise smart movie, bashed Ewoks. Then Mark Altman counts the *Jedi* Special Edition as one of the worst films of 1997. But the last straw was in your last issue ("Letters," July/August '98) when Neil John Brimelow wrote, "We all hated the little bastards known as Ewoks."



I think it's time that someone spoke for the silent majority of *Star Wars* fans who don't hate *Jedi* or Ewoks. I have not met a single *Star Wars* fan who hates Ewoks. Most of my friends who are *Star Wars* fans count *Jedi* as their favorite.

The *Star Wars* saga is many things, but at its heart it is mythology. Like all myths, it is filled with archetypal characters. Darth Vader is the embodiment of evil. Obi-Wan is the wise mentor. Ewoks [represent the] human spirit—primitives who overcome the odds to help bring down the Empire. Anyone who doesn't understand the Ewoks' place in the saga doesn't understand Lucas' vision.

Did the Ewoks appeal to younger moviegoers? Yes. Does that make them detestable? Hardly.

And as for *Jedi* itself, it simply kicks ass on a level that only two other films have attained: *Star Wars* and *The Empire*



Strikes Back. Like all *Star Wars* films, it is above criticism.

JOHN HANSEN
FARGO, ND

PSYCHO DRAMA

It had to happen. For once—and it pains me to say it—I agree with Mark Altman. The *Psycho* remake is exactly what's wrong with Hollywood today. Is Hollywood so idea-bankrupt that it has to remake a classic film that was perfect in the first place? I'm sorry to

lary of suspense is severely restricted and he gleefully revisited the same set pieces, character types and gimmicks again and again throughout his very long career.

Hitchcock was also a master promoter of his own work. The man who invented *Psycho's* brilliant "no admission after the movie starts" stunt might appreciate the publicity value of announcing a "word-for-word" remake of one of the most famous films of all time.

KYLE BUNN
LYNNWOOD, WA



say that the answer is probably yes.
GREGORY M. FELTES
SOUTH BARRINGTON, IL

Mark Altman asks why anyone would remake Hitchcock ("The Last Word," July/August '98). Too bad he can't ask Hitch himself: He remade his own *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, not scene-for-scene but certainly twist-for-twist. In fact, Hitchcock knew better than anyone that the vocabu-

WARRIOR WOMAN

I was pleased to see your review of *The Warriors* ("Back of the Rack," July/August '98), one of my favorite movies of all time. It was the first movie I bought on video. Along with the scenes you mentioned, one of my favorites is when they get back to Coney Island after fighting their way home: Swan looks at Coney

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Island and says, "They fought all night to get back to this?" Keep up the good work!

DOREEN WOOD
HIGHTSTOWN, NJ



FALSE ADVERTISING?

Regarding your article about Samuel L. Jackson in the July/August issue: When, if ever, did you talk about his role in *Star Wars: Episode One*? It seemed like all you talked about in that article was how he was always playing second banana to someone else in the other movies he's acted in.

I like to see the things you're promoting on the cover actually show up in the body of the magazine. And you could have placed the plot hints about the aforementioned *Star Wars: Episode One* before the back two pages of the magazine. Many readers

probably do not read the last pages of your magazine due to your bashing of some worthwhile sci-fi movies. I almost missed it myself.

While your magazine has some rough edges, it had good intentions, and therefore I will continue to read it for the sake of the starving writers hired on as staff of your magazine.

ANDREW CURL
DES MOINES, IA

PLOT DOES MATTER

When I first heard about the *Godzilla* movie, I thought it was going to be great. The special effects looked cool and it looked like it would be a suspenseful movie. And what made me most interested was that it would be directed by Roland Emmerich, who was the director of *Independence Day*, one of my favorite movies. So I had to go see *Godzilla*.

After seeing the movie, I was so disappointed I was in shock. I couldn't believe that it was supposed to be the summer's big hit movie.

There were a lot of reasons why the movie was disappointing. All the time *Godzilla* was running around New York City, it was night, so you couldn't see what the big lizard was really doing. It looked like Emmerich didn't have a light on the set. If he did, then it was low on batter-

ies. And when the babies hatched they looked like the raptors from *Jurassic Park*. The title should have been changed to *Jurassic Park 3*.

I sure hope Emmerich and Dean Devlin's next movie isn't another big [high-concept movie] that turns into a big disappointment. That's just what *Godzilla* turned out to be.

ERIC KERHIN
BREWSTER, OH

WHO REVIEW

It is always a pleasure to open your magazine and see a picture of or read a reference to *Doctor Who*! I have been a fan of the good Doctor for around a decade. I believe that *Doctor Who* is a great piece of science fiction. Sure the acting is melodramatic, the sets are cardboard and all the monsters have huge zippers up their backs, but you don't care! The rocket fuel that powers these adventures through time and space is not big-budget CGI effects or Oscar-caliber acting, but the twisting, turning, in-your-face plots.

Hollywood should take a lesson from the longest-running [sci-fi TV] series ever. They should sit down and analyze just what made the Doctor so damn popular.

MATT MIDLOCK
JOLIET, IL

SEX, LIES AND CINESCAPE

I have never written a letter of complaint to anyone in my life, but I am appalled at the last two issues of your magazine! They have pornography throughout the whole issue! It scares me to think that this magazine is designed for children/young adults. I would like to cancel our subscription and would also appreciate a

reimbursement of my money.
NAME AND ADDRESS
WITHHELD

We're sorry if anything in the July/August issue (particularly the pictures on pages 50, 58, 62, 69, 80 and 81—quick, look them up!) offended anyone. But, contrary to the opinion expressed above, this magazine is not "designed for children." It targets smart action and science-fiction fans, most of whom are old enough and strong enough to look upon the occasional risqué picture without suffering any serious emotional trauma. —Ed.





Godzilla vs. The Hype Monster

Did bad reviews or publicity overkill torpedo summer's "sure thing" blockbuster?

Who would have guessed that *Godzilla's* finest moment would involve a talking chihuahua?

Before it was released, Sony Pictures' mega-budgeted reptile epic was the odds-on favorite to be the summer's biggest blockbuster. Once it hit theaters, though, it was clear the Toho Terror had laid an egg. Limited audience appeal, bad word-of-mouth, a weak screenplay, lame acting and hyper-exaggerated studio expectations all conspired to fell the mutant lizard, which stalled at around \$150 million in North American box-office returns. After only a few weeks in multiplexes, it was clear that interest had waned, that *Godzilla* merchandise had failed to catch on and that commercials featuring Taco Bell's loquacious canine trying to capture the monster ("Here leezard, leezard, leezard") were far more entertaining than the movie they publicized.

And in a twisted way, the chihuahua was part of what helped seal the movie's perceived doom. *Godzilla* can't really be considered a flop—after all, the movie gobbled up \$55.5 million in its first week of release and has done strong business overseas. But when set against the oversized hype generated by Sony's omnipresent green billboards ("Size does matter," "His foot is longer than this bus," etc.), tie-in deals, 200 product-licensing agreements and the estimated \$200 million spent on making and promoting the film, *Godzilla* seems like a dud.

"Sony definitely set themselves up for a fall in a lot of ways," says



Daily Variety reporter Andrew Hindes. "The amount of money they put into marketing, the secretive quality they had about not letting anyone see the design for the monster—they kind of created this aura that it was a really big thing. It clearly didn't live up to the idea that it was going to be the next

Independence Day or even the next *Men in Black*. It ended up being a genre film, basically."

Once the dust settled, *Godzilla* hadn't just wreaked havoc in New York City: He also victimized everyone who had bought into the hype, including Sony's product-licensing partners and the theater owners bullied

Green Peace

Toho Pictures may be one of *Godzilla's* few beneficiaries: The studio should reap millions in revenues gained by loaning the lizard's name to Sony. Toho agreed to the deal only on the condition that the horror of nuclear war be part of the Hollywood movie's plot.



into showing the movie on more than 7,000 screens. All were persuaded that the movie would be one of the biggest blockbusters ever. The studio initially lobbied for 80 percent of the film's first-week ticket sales before backing down and agreeing to take a smaller cut. The movie ended up with the third-biggest Memorial Day weekend opening ever, but it fell far short of the \$90.2 million debut enjoyed last Memorial Day by *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*. It also made less than the \$56 million that *Mission: Impossible* raked in over the same period in 1996, although the Tom Cruise vehicle opened at 300 fewer theaters.

Sony may have alienated some of the exhibitors by showing *Godzilla* down their throats with high [film print] rental terms and being forced into the wide release pattern that pulled screens away from other

Yet the official studio line has been to deflect the criticism and praise its hype-meisters. "In hindsight the marketing campaign was very good and we were able to set this up as a big event movie," says Sony spokesman Dennis Higgins. "I don't think we set ourselves up for a fall at all. The marketing gave the movie the best positioning it could for success."

Though most analysts agree that *Godzilla*'s aggressive ad campaign was to blame for the bloated expectations, fault for the movie's poor quality falls squarely on the shoulders of Devlin and Emmerich, whose stock surely has dropped from the heights it reached after the duo's *ID4* success.

"Their attitudes on this film may have rubbed people the wrong way as being arrogant," Hudes says. "They're still seen as filmmakers who can develop hit effects-driven movies, but they've lost their edge being seen as the scrappy young newcomers."



movies," says an industry analyst. "It may be a sore spot in the future."

Another touchy subject may be producer Dean Devlin and director Roland Emmerich's insistence on keeping the lizard's design veiled until the film's opening, which stunted sales of licensed merchandise.

"The general standard is that retailers sell about 30 percent of their merchandise before a film comes out," says Robert Felton, associate editor of *License!* magazine. "So stores know they lost almost a third of their sales. The marketing campaign certainly caused the public to expect far more than what the film delivered."

expected to leave any excessive long-term damage.

These wounds will heal pretty fast, all Sony needs is a couple of hits," says one insider. Felton concurs, saying that retailers haven't been too adversely affected by the film's disappointing performance.

Whether or not Sony exercises its option on *Godzilla* sequels, however, is another matter. The studio insists that no follow-ups have been planned, but there are rumors that they already have pulled the plug on one sequel in development. Which goes to show that in Hollywood size matters—but the bottom line matters even more. ♦

Duds Ahoy!

The good news: The long-rumored *Love Boat* movie is in turnaround.

The bad news: *Parky Island*.

Charlie's Angels, *Inspector Gadget*.

I Dream of Jeannie, *Dudley Do*.

Right, *Beowulf* and *Land of the*.

Loch movies are still on their way.

When even *Hogan's Heroes* can

be touted as a big-screen con-

tinuer—and a film based on the

useless '60s sitcom is indeed in

the works—it's clear that no show

is too stupid or pointless for a cine-

matic revival. Nevertheless, we're

hoping that certain television tre-

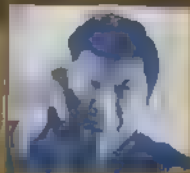
sures will be kept in their late-night

UHF-TV slots and not gussied up

and dumped in theaters.

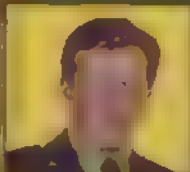


The Misadventures of Sheriff Lobo

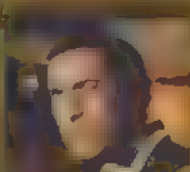


It's a question that has plagued philosophers for the last ten decades: Which would be worse—*Ali* and *The Bear*, *The Motion Picture* or *Shrek*, *Lobo* or *The Motion Picture*? We give our vote for *Lobo*.

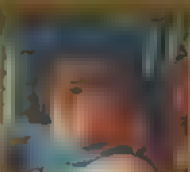
Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea



That this life cheerless hasn't been raised as a big-budget FX spectacular is disappointing, but perhaps Hollywood learned its lesson from *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. *The Next Generation*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Star Wars*.



Surely some movie moguls must have been tempted to green-light *Star Wars* remake for the summer of 1999, but maybe the fact that we don't have a moonbase at the moment convinced them not to do it.



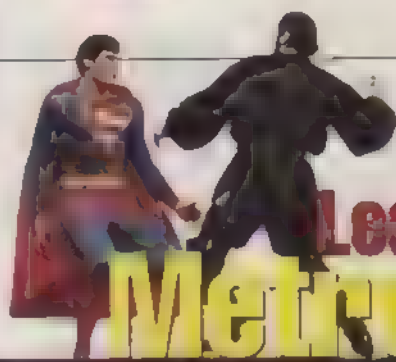
Thunderbirds

Despite the continuing popularity of *Kevin*, *James* and *David* Quilley, we don't think moviegoers really want to see a film in which all the characters are played by wooden-faced puppets.



Small Wonder

The idea of making a range in the balance of a movie based on two interlocking characters would surely release a host of radical elements, including that would destroy us all. First, prior to delivery from *Small Wonder*.



Leaving Metropolis

It wasn't kryptonite but the power of movie politics that finally grounded *Superman: Reborn*. Still, leading man Nicolas Cage and director Tim Burton are rebounding from the project's fatal blow quite nicely.

Although the Academy Award-winning actor has been showered with offers to appear in a variety of projects, Cage seems closest to working with director Martin Scorsese on his next film, an adaptation of the Joseph Connelly novel *Bringing Out the Dead*. Cage would portray a New York paramedic burned out by the nature of his gruesome job. The actor's name also has been linked to Ron Howard's *Sea Wolf* and a big-screen adaptation of the classic Japanese 'toon *Speed Racer*.

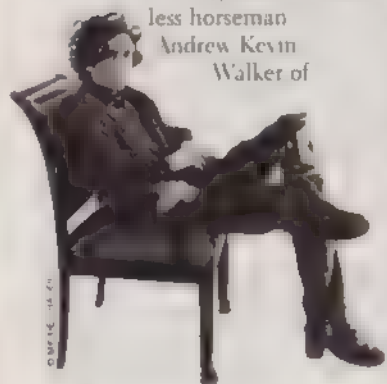
Burton will move on to helm *Sleepy Hollow*, a live action adaptation of Washington Irving's classic tale about discredited teacher Ichabod Crane who is haunted by the ghost of a headless horseman. Andrew Kevin Walker of



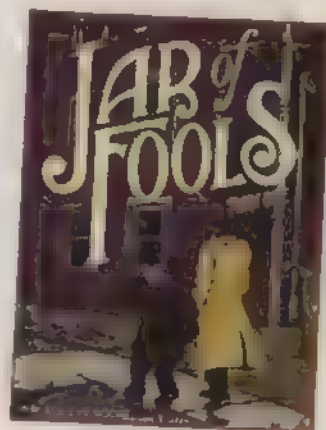
Seven and 8 Millimeter fame authored the screenplay for the film, which will begin

shooting on location in upstate New York this autumn. Burton also is rumored to be involved in producing projects based on R.L. Stine's best-selling *Goosebumps* series.

Not every *Superman: Reborn* refugee has it so easy though. Trouble is still looming for *Chasing Amy* writer-director Kevin Smith, who left the Supermovie project when Burton rejected his fanboy-friendly screenplay. Smith's newest film, the religious comedy *Dogma*, is drawing fire from conservative groups such as the Catholic League, which finds the story of a woman saving humanity by defeating two renegade angels offensive. No final cut of the film yet exists, but distributor Miramax's parent company Disney, has already received multiple requests to re-cut *Dogma* or limit its release altogether. ♦



After years of spotty success bringing action-heavy superhero comic books to the big screen, Hollywood's starting to try its luck with more serious funny books. 20th Century Fox has acquired the rights to Alan Moore's upcoming fantasy thriller *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. Set in Victorian England, the comic series pits an array of real and fictitious characters (like Alan Quartermain, Captain Nemo and Henry Jekyll) against forces planning to destroy the British Empire. Moore's Jack the Ripper story *From Hell* already is being developed by *Dead Presidents* directors the Hughes brothers for New Line, and *Lethal Weapon* producer Joel Silver's Warner Bros.-based company optioned Moore's gritty *V for Vendetta*.



Meanwhile, an adaptation of another dark fantasy, Jason Lutes' *Jar of Fools*, has been picked up by indie Aurora Productions. The comic chronicles the relationship between a troubled young man and Harry Houdini's mentor Flossie the Magnificent, who introduces the youth to a magical world. ♦

Anti-Superheroes

Deep Pockets

The heroes of *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon* fought against the odds to save the world from killer space rocks. Now an organization of scientists says it's Hollywood's turn: It's asking Paramount, which released *Deep Impact*, and Disney, which released *Armageddon*, to donate \$50,000 to support a program to find asteroids and comets before they pulverize Earth. The Space Frontier Foundation wants to give the money to a project called "The

Watch," which hopes to raise \$1 million a year for various observatories. "Hollywood is making a lot of money playing off of the fear [of asteroids]—now it's time for them to ante up," a Space Frontier statement boomed.

There's no word on whether either studio will fork up the dough, but considering *Deep Impact*'s success and *Armageddon*'s disappointment, Paramount seems like the studio that can afford to be charitable. ♦

The power of an immortal.
The soul of a human.
The heart of a hero.

WESLEY SNIPES

BLADE



Man of Steel

Superman Reborn may have been shelved, but another male subject is considering suiting up in a comic-book superhero.

Now that Tom Cruise has been freed from his marathon *Eyes Wide Shut* shoot for Stanley Kubrick, he's looking to produce and possibly star in *Iron Man*. If he opted to take on the role, Cruise would play Tony Stark, a reclusive Howard Hughes-like tycoon who fights crime with the help of the cyborg-style superarmor he designed himself. Ironically enough, Nicolas Cage once was interested in the part, but instead chose to



star in Tim Burton's ill-fated Superman film. As would be expected, Cruise's return from

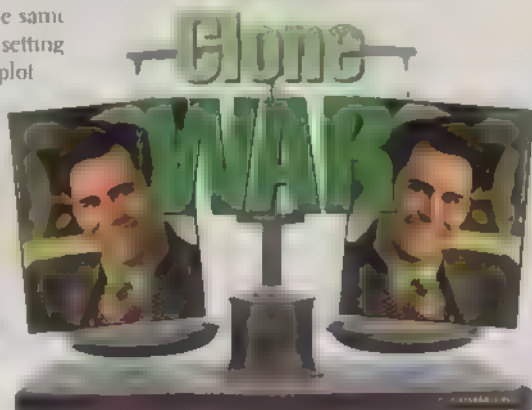
Planet Kubrick has triggered the interest of every casting director in town. The toothy actor and Steven Spielberg reportedly have a handshake agreement to work together on a project (most likely an adaptation of Nicholas Sparks' schmaltzy novel *The Notebook*). He's also said to be planning *Mission: Impossible 2* and has had his name suggested as the potential lead of the Mel Gibson-directed *Fahrenheit 451*. ♦

A New York playwright is asserting that Truman Burbank isn't the only guy to be abused by an only media titan. Mark Dunn filed a \$300 million lawsuit against Paramount Pictures alleging that the idea for *The Truman Show* was stolen from a play he staged off-Broadway in 1992.

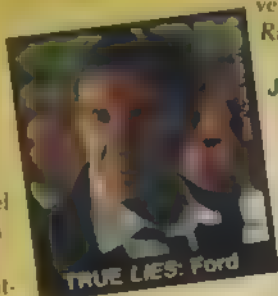
Dunn says that the theater piece *Frank's Life* featured 108 similarities to Jim Carrey's hit film, scripted by Gattaca director Andrew Niccol. According to Dunn, Frank and Truman's stories share the same general theme, setting, characters and plot.

However, *Variety* has reported that Niccol finished his first draft of *The Truman Show* (then called *The Malcolm Show*) in May 1991, nearly a year before

Dunn's show debuted. From that first draft, Niccol created a one-page treatment that included the following plot summary: "Malcolm is the star of a 24-hour continuous soap opera in the future but doesn't know it. He has been filmed by hidden cameras every second of his life." The treatment went on to follow the final *Truman* script in substantive ways. Still, Dunn maintains that if Niccol only had a concept in 1992, the film's details could still have been taken from his play. ♦



Ford Aboard
Harrison Ford will team with director Robert Zemeckis for *What Lies Beneath*, a supernatural thriller about a college professor who must unravel a murder mystery. The concept for the film was created by Steven Spielberg.



TRUE LIES: Ford

Mountie Bounty
It looks like Brendan Fraser will trade his *George of the Jungle* loincloth in for a red Mountie uniform. The actor

plans to take on another Jay Ward creation in a big-screen version of *Dudley Do-Right*.

Jet Propulsion
After dazzling American audiences with his martial-arts acrobatics in *Lethal*

Weapon 4, Asian superstar Jet Li will get \$3 million to star as the good guy in the Warner Bros. gangster movie *Romeo Must Die*.



SOARING JET: Li

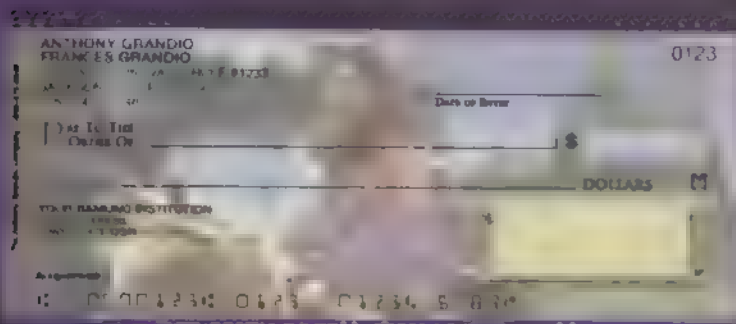
Independent Thinking
Warner Bros. has announced plans to release Barry Sonnenfeld's *The Wild Wild West* on 1999's Fourth of July weekend. It'll be the third time the plumb *Independence Day* launch has been reserved for a Will Smith film. The star broke records during the same weekend in 1996 with *Independence Day* and in 1997 with *Men in Black*.



TRIPLE FOURTH: Smith

Flight the Future
Veteran *X-Files* and *Millennium* scribes Glen Morgan and James Wong are making the jump to feature films with *Flight 140*. The New Line Cinema thriller will focus on high-school students who mysteriously start dying one by one after a member of the group has a premonition that the titular flight would crash. Morgan and Wong will collaborate on the screenplay and Wong will direct, in his feature debut. ♦

BATTLE ON...

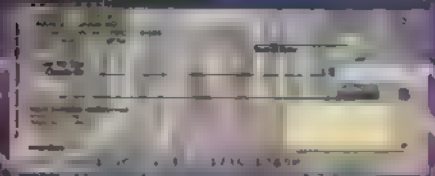
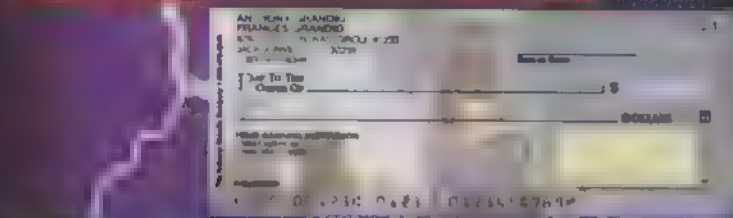
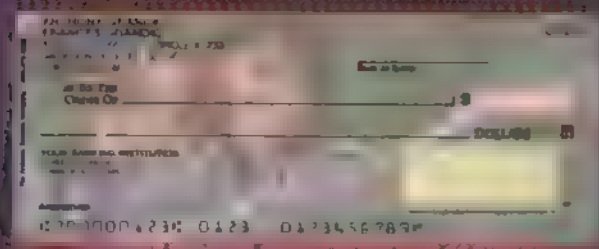


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RUSHES

W H Y Y O U S H O U L D R A T E I T

Iove over, Neve and Jamie Lee. With lead roles in two high-profile horror thrillers this year, 19-year-old *Dawson's Creek* star Katie Holmes may be ready to take her crown as the big screen's next scream queen.

In *Disturbing Behavior*, the *Stepford Wives* 90210 drama from former *X-Files* helmer David Nutter, Holmes plays a rebellious high-schooler whose teacher deviously turns the town's teens into zombie-like overachievers.

"It's an interesting take on how the authority is tweaking the brains of these kids to make them seem so perfect," she says. "I really liked [my role] because it's kind of a dark character and it's different from anything that I've ever played, and that's what drew me to the project. There are so many horror scripts going around Hollywood these days with the success of *Scream* and *Scream 2*, [but] this one was just a little different. It's not a slasher [movie]; it's more of a thriller."

Despite battling soulless honor students in the movie, Holmes herself has a picture-perfect background. A native of Toledo, Ohio, the actress scored top grades at her prep school while appearing in class theater productions. While on a trip to New York, she happened to meet a talent manager who encouraged her to travel to L.A. and try to land a role on a television pilot.

Instead, she won a part in Ang Lee's acclaimed sexual-revolution drama *The Ice Storm* after her first professional audition. Unfazed by the success, Holmes returned to high school, only to find herself cast in *Scream* scribe

Kevin Williamson's teen drama *Dawson's Creek* a few months later. Playing doe-eyed tomboy Joey Potter, Holmes has been lighting the fires of the *Oxy-10* set since the show debuted earlier this year.

Next up for Holmes is Williamson's directorial debut, *Killing Mrs. Tingle*, a comedy-laced horror story about students who want to knock off a detested teacher. Like most actresses, though, she's concerned about being typecast. "I would get bored if I kept doing the same thing over and over," she explains. "With [*Disturbing Behavior*] it's been challenging and rewarding to do something so different." Plus, Holmes doesn't particularly think she has the mettle for terror.

"I never watched all the *Halloween* movies or *Friday the 13th*. I saw *Scream* and *Scream 2*, but I was pretty scared," she admits. "I'm a wimp." —Annabelle Villanueva



Katie

Holmes



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RUSHES

W

hile Carla Gugino's talent undoubtedly helped her capture a plum role opposite Nicolas Cage in Brian De Palma's frenetic thriller *Snake Eyes*, her appreciation for the director's other movies might have clinched the deal. "Carrie is one of my favorite movies ever," she says. "And I've seen *Mission: Impossible*, I don't know, 10 times probably."

Those multiple viewings of De Palma's convoluted blockbuster must have prepared Gugino for *Snake Eyes*' twisted storyline. The film takes place in real time, with a heavyweight boxing match doubling as the stage for a political assassination—the Secretary of Defense is killed while sitting ringside. Gugino plays a balletics expert entangled in the conspiracy who helps Cage

resolve the murder. "You read the script in an hour or so and by the end you're catching your breath," she says. "[We're] in a very contained space, and the movie takes place in a contained amount of time. We were shooting inside [a Montreal sports arena] for about six weeks, doing predominantly different parts of the same scene, because you have so many different POVs from the people who saw the shooting."

Gugino's best known for her brief turn as Michael J. Fox's girlfriend in his ABC series *Spin City*. She's also appeared in *Michael*, *This Boy's Life* and the BBC version of Edith Wharton's *The Buccaneers*. The eclectic résumé reflects her unconventional upbringing, which saw her shuttling between her dad's Florida home and her mother's

California hippie existence (at one point they lived in a tepee).

Now the 27-year-old is poised for her big-screen breakthrough with *Snake Eyes*, where she goes toe-to-toe against megastar Cage. It's definitely a long way from her first leading lady gig, when she played Pauly Shore's love interest in *Son-in-Law*. "I think my character represents the truth of this piece," she says.

"She has an integrity that is really interesting. [The character's] perspective ultimately brings everything in the movie together." The dark-haired Gugino also was excited about sporting a flaxen-colored wig for the role, calling to mind another De Palma chiller. "When I got to wear the blonde wig and the white suit, I felt I was doing a little *Dressed to Kill*," she laughs. —Anabelle Villanueva



Carla
Gugino

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BLACK HOLE SUN

James Spader

returns to sci-fi in

the dark space

epic *Supernova*

Direct the resume of veteran filmmaker Walter Hill to you. He may have had a hand in producing the *Alien* series, but he insists that his newest effort, *Supernova*, won't be *Alien 6*. And, just in case you were worried, there's something else he maintains his dark sci-fi film won't be. A *Streetcar Named Desire* in space. While many directors new to science fiction like to insist "This film isn't about special effects—it's about people," Hill is refreshingly honest about what he hopes to accomplish.

"Science fiction is by definition 'premise oriented.' It doesn't mean you shouldn't try very hard to have good, strong characters, but to do Tennessee Williams on a spaceship might be good drama but somehow doesn't quite meet the definition of what science fiction is," Hill says. "I think a lot of people are interested in science fiction because they want to know what it's going to tell them about how people are going to live in the future. I think science fiction is utterly worthless in that capacity. It's a form of literature that's not particularly sound or even interesting in a predictive sense."

So what exactly can viewers expect from *Supernova*? Try this on for size: Nearly 150 years in the future, the medical rescue ship *Nightingale 229* is on a quiet patrol of deep space. But the crew (James Spader, Robert Forster, Lou Diamond Phillips, Angela Bassett and Robin Tunney) finds its R&R disrupted when the ship receives an emergency distress signal. The source of the signal is a distant moon on which an alien artifact with supernatural powers has been discovered. En route to investigate, the ship is sucked into the gravitational vortex created by a giant star on the verge of imploding. Suddenly, the crew has to grapple with both the evil artifact and the massive explosion—a supernova—that will shred space once the star has collapsed in upon itself.

That plot synopsis might make the film sound like *Alien Meets Event Horizon Meets*

Sphere, but Hill's crew promises *Supernova* will be unique.

"It's not *Aliens*," insists production designer Marek Dobrowolski (*The Craft*). "We wanted to get away from that concept that was produced so well and reproduced many, many times by others. Why do the same thing as *Event Horizon* and *Lost in Space*?"

Instead, Dobrowolski says, *Supernova* is more a marriage of 2001: *A Space Odyssey* and *Crimson Tide*.

"We're talking about confined spaces, horror sequences and the simplicity of 2001," he explains.

But even Dobrowolski seems to realize there's a certain been there, done that quality to the film.

"I hope [*Supernova*] will be different," he says. "I won't say significantly different, but hope it will be different."

BY BETH LASKI



€

Visual effects supervisor Mark Stetson shows a little more confidence that *Supernova* will have its own identity.

"We discussed the *Alien* films and the other end of that spectrum, the *Star Trek* and *Lost in Space* sort of design," he says. "This is not either one of those. This is a balance point, somewhere in between. It's sort of a retro-style, but not a retro-technology."

Stetson and Dobrowolski point to their use of holograms as one of the ways they departed from the clichés of futuristic films. "We wanted to get away from the standard, monitor look of spaceships and we came up with the idea of using holograms," says Dobrowolski.

So instead of staring at computer screens like your everyday Spock or Ripley, the characters in *Supernova* will interact with holographic projections. Sounds like a pretty minor detail, but it should prove impressive on the big screen: The holograms, as well as the rest of the film's effects, are being created by FX powerhouse Digital Domain. Stetson promises that the film's CG effects—particularly the climactic supernova—will blow audiences away.

"It's going to be the biggest explosion in the universe," Stetson says. "It'll be entirely CG. I don't want to give you the shot count on it, but it involves events that take place inside the ship as well as outside the ship. I think we'll see the event take place on an ever-expanding scale."

Not only will the big bang be cool, it will also have an extra bonus quality most FX extravaganzas don't aspire to: realism. Jacklyn

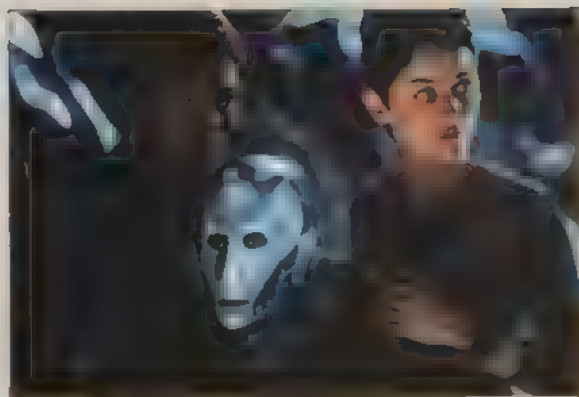
Green, an astronomer with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., was brought aboard the project as an advisor to the creative staff. Green worked closely with Dobrowolski, costume designer Bob Ringwood, art director Bruce Robert Hill and the visual effects department as a consultant on surface materials, color schemes and atmospheric conditions that would be prevalent on a moon hovering near a giant star. The filmmakers also had to know what could or couldn't be achieved in zero gravity. Green also assisted the filmmakers in creating a moon mining operation and projecting where technology might be in 150 years or so.

"We tried to base [everything in the film] on reality," Dobrowolski says. "I believe that once you lay out the possibilities, then you can design the action and make it much more dramatic and much more real. Whatever happens is happening for real. If this is a pure fantasy and anything goes, the audience is not really interested because it doesn't really exist."

But making the action and danger seem real to audiences wasn't the biggest challenge the

Supernova crew faced. They faced a certain, very Hollywood kind of danger themselves: The film has had to run a gauntlet of script rewrites, budget wrangling and creative squabbles to make it into production.

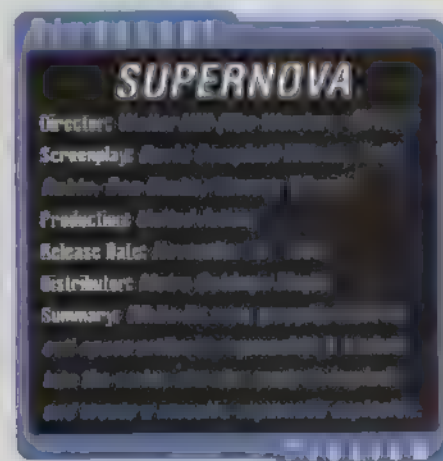
Hill is the third director on the pricey project,



replacing Australian director Geoffrey Wright (*Romper Stomper*), who was brought in after MGM/UA fired first-time director Joe Nimziki.

Nimziki set up the original script, written by Dan Chuba and Jamie Dixon, when he was the studio's executive vice president of worldwide advertising. In an unusual move, the studio told Nimziki that if he stayed in his job long enough to help market such films as *Leaving Las Vegas*, he would get the opportunity to direct his first film. But Nimziki was replaced just weeks after he left his studio job when the \$15 million film became a \$50 million film and hence was too much of a gamble for the studio to take with a novice director. David Campbell Wilson (*Tomorrow Never Dies*) was brought in to rewrite the script, and Wright was hired to replace Nimziki and direct his first feature for an American studio. But it was only months later that Wright was ousted from the director's chair, reportedly over creative differences with the studio.

Despite the musical chairs, production wrapped in Los Angeles in July after a 12-week shoot. The project is now well into the post-production process, which means *Supernova* should blast into theaters as expected this November. ♦





Who did Darth Vader say
was "not as forgiving" as he?

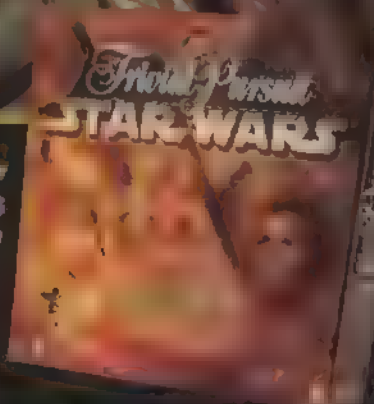


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STAR WARS

VS

STAR TREK

THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST FRANCHISES SQUARE OFF IN A BATTLE FOR SCI-FI SUPREMACY

BY ERIK J. MARTIN & STEVE HOCKENSMITH

Star Wars: Our magazine co-edits nearly argued over the age to go and all went apart. "Star Wars? Is that the show with Dr. Spock?" your grandmother might ask. "Star Trek? What Debbie Reynolds' little girl Carlo is that?" But for anyone who can tell a blaster from a phaser, Star Trek and Star Wars are far, far from interchangeable. Wars, as the name suggests, is a sweeping saga of conflict on a galactic scale, with the forces of good and evil battling to control vast galaxies and individual souls. Trek, on the other hand, is about the journey of discovery that awaits humanity once it can find peace on Earth and finally voyage to the stars.

The differences between the two are so pronounced, some high-minded critics would insist they might say they're the genre's biggest apple and orange—the two properties are so essentially alien to each other they don't have enough common ground for a fair comparison. Yet the fastest and the startleworthy at a sci-fi convention is to shout "Trek ruled! Star Wars ruled!" in a crowded dealer room. Just step back and watch the Wookiee fur fly.

In that fanish spirit of just-for-the-heck-of-it silliness, we've taken it upon ourselves to pit the two franchises in a battle for science fiction's heavyweight championship. Which is bigger? Which is better? We'll be the ball and let the contenders come out swinging.

CULTURAL IMPACT

ROUND 1

Ask yourself this: How many kids do you know who asked for a U.S.S. Enterprise playset for Christmas? How many of your young cousins or nieces or nephews while away their afternoons with their Benjamin Sisko and Kathryn Janeway action figures? Do you know of a single fifth-grader who would feel safe going to school wearing a "Spock Loves!" or "Beam me up, Scotty!" T-shirt?

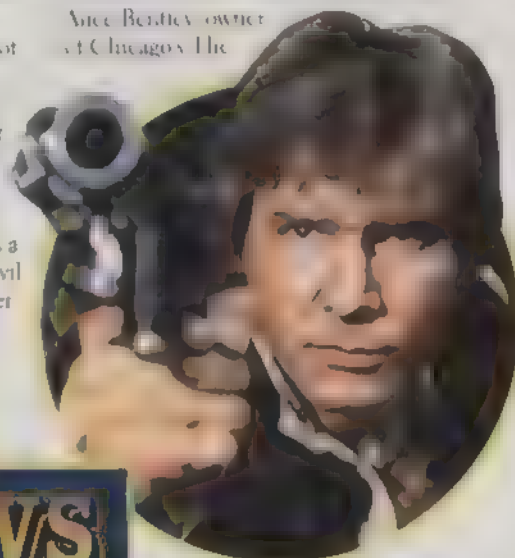
Now go to your local Toys "R" Us and check out the long, overflowing aisles of *Star Wars* toys. Head over to the JC Penneys and rifle through rack after rack of Chewbacca T-shirts and Han Solo p.j.s. And as long as you're at the mall, swing over to Target and pick yourself up a *Return of the Jedi* lunchbox and a Darth Vader notebook binder.

It's plain to see. For an entire generation, *Star Wars* is cool. *Star Trek* is not. And that's nothing new. *Star Wars* has always been the shock, Han Solo-ish charmer able to win over young and old alike with good looks, a strong sense of humor and a general dynamism. *Star Trek*, on the other hand, has a less suave, more Spocklike personality—aloof, cerebral, over-nerdy. That's why there's a derogatory term for *Trek* fans—Trekies—but no similarly condescending nickname for *Wars* followers.

James Gunn, director of the Center of the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas, says the *Wars* saga appeals to a broader audience than *Trek* because its storyline is more straightforward and mythical. "*Star Wars* at its core is a simple fairy tale," says Gunn, who is also a respected SF novelist. "It's a story about a princess abducted by an evil magician and the heroes who rescue her

from the dark castle."

That kind of uncomplicated good against evil storytelling explains why younger viewers in particular can't resist *Wars*. "You generally see a lot more younger fans into *Star Wars* than *Star Trek*," says Alice Berthel, owner of Chicago's The



Stars Our

Destination SF bookstore. "There's a greater age range among *Wars* fans because it appeals to all ages, even though the *Trek* franchise is older."

That broader appeal made *Star Wars* an ambassador for sci-fi cinema in the late '70s and early '80s. While the studios always viewed

Trek as a fringe phenomenon not worth emulating, *Wars* convinced Hollywood's decision-makers that audiences were clamoring for big, loud special-effects spectacles.

Star Wars' success in 1977 changed movies radically and was responsible for wholesale changes in the entire film industry," says *Chicago Tribune* movie critic Michael Wilmington. "Without *Star Wars* you wouldn't have had people investing in the first *Star Trek* movie."

According to Wilmington, George Lucas' trilogy—and to a lesser degree, the *Star Trek* franchise—made science fiction more attractive to investors and inspired a boom in special-effects computer technology.

But while *Wars* might have made a bigger splash in America's malls, schools, and complexes, *Trek* has left its mark on society in more substantive ways.

"During the Cold War, with people hiding in bomb shelters and preparing to be blown up, Gene Roddenberry was there with *Star Trek* telling us, 'Yes, there will be a future, and it will be a good future,'" says Ann Crispin, who has written novels for Bantam's *Star Wars* series as well as Pocket Books' *Star Trek* line. "He was a big risk taker. He could comment on the Vietnam War and the relationship between men and women through his science fiction. He was vastly ahead of his time."

Trek broke new ground for American television by giving highly visible roles to an Asian (George Takei) and an African-American (Nichelle Nichols) and promoting the idea that humanity would one day overcome racial prejudice. How potent was this message of multicultural harmony? When Nichols considered leaving the show, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. talked her out of it.

Scientists, researchers and inventors have also turned to *Trek* for inspiration. Kirk and company's hand-held communicators pre-

dated cellular phones by decades. And Kirk and Spock were talking to their ship's computer long before voice-recognition software was possible. Weapons labs are now working on phaser-like hand-held weapons, and physicians are currently testing radar-based scanners along the lines of Dr. McCoy's medical tricorder.

"NASA engineers don't look to *Star Wars* for the future they'd like to create. They look to *Star Trek*," says Jeff Greenwald, author of *Future Perfect: How Star Trek Conquered Planet Earth*. "A lot of people in the science and technology fields have cited *Star Trek* as their influence."

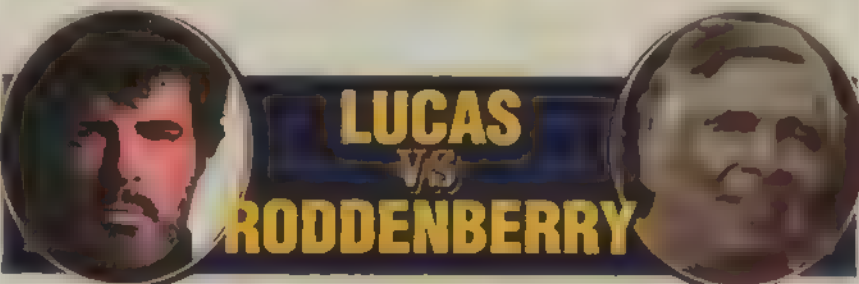
Greenwald points out another edge *Trek* has over *Wars* in the cultural impact face-off. It was first. "[*Trek*] is the first contemporary myth we've ever had," he says. "It mirrors the growth of the American consciousness from the Camelot days of the '60s to the high-tech, Webbed-out days of the '90s."



Yes, *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* are filled with inspiring messages and role models. Yeah, they're both continuations of the ancient tradition of mythic storytelling. Sure, they're both telling reflections of the cultural zeitgeist. But let's not forget what they're really all about—money money money. "Franchise" is, after all, a term created by suits and accountants, so any *Trek/Wars*

CLASH OF THE TITANS

As long as we're pitting *Star Trek* against *Star Wars*, why not be truly sacrilegious and throw in a no-holds-barred cage match between the competing franchises' creators? So here they are, Gene "The Great Bird of the Galaxy" Roddenberry and George "I'm Beloved By Movie Fans the World Over Yet Not One of Them Has Bothered to Give Me a Decent Nickname" Lucas, head to head for the very first time.



Trainers: Akira Kurosawa, Joseph Campbell, Flash Gordon, Jack Kirby and other comic-book masters

In His Corner: Everyone who has seen a *Star Wars* or Indiana Jones movie (i.e., more or less everyone in the world)

Victories: *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, the Indiana Jones series, *American Graffiti*

Defeats: *More American Graffiti*, *Howard the Duck*, *Willow*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

Split Decisions: *THX-1138*, *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*

Best Move: Negotiating with 20th Century Fox in the mid 1970s to secure the merchandising rights to the *Star Wars* franchise

Reach: Worldwide

Height: In 1983, with the release of *Return of the Jedi* and completion of his classic trilogy

Weight Class: Heavyweight. He's attached his name to more all-time box-office champs than anyone except his buddy, Steven Spielberg. When Lucas says, "Jump," Hollywood reaches for a pogo stick.

Trainers: Jules Verne, *Wagon Train*, *Forbidden Planet*, Isaac Asimov and other pulp sci-fi masters

In His Corner: "Trekkers" (i.e., computer programmers, computer technicians, computer salesmen and sci-fi movie magazine editors)

Victories: *Star Trek* (syndicated run), *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*

Defeats: *Genesis II*, *Planet Earth*, *The Questor Tapes*, *Strange New World* (all failed pilots)

Split Decisions: *Star Trek* (the original three-year run)

Best Move: Outmaneuvering meddling NBC executives who wanted him to get rid of that weird alien guy with the funny ears

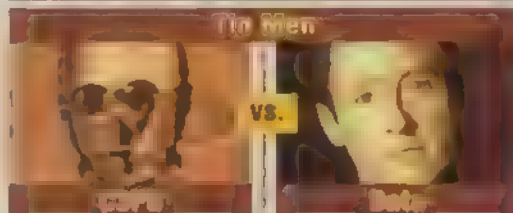
Reach: Worldwide

Height: In 1979, when his cult-favorite television series *Star Trek* was turned into a \$40 million motion picture

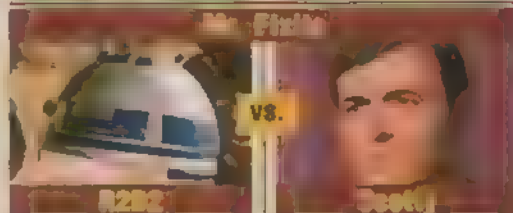
Weight Class: Middleweight. Although he provided Paramount with one of its biggest, most-consistent moneymakers, he lost creative control of the *Trek* movie series after *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

BEAM ME UP, R2

Star Trek and *Star Wars* are different in a lot of ways. Could far-out space hippies hitch a ride on the Millennium Falcon? Why don't Star Destroyers have female officers in miniskirts? But there is common ground. In fact, certain *Trek* and *Wars* characters seem almost interchangeable.



They're smart, they're gold, they're robotic and they talk too much. Which one would fetch a higher price at 'Bots "R" Us? Probably the one you can switch off: C3PO.



A Swiss Army knife on wheels, R2 can repair hyperdrives and open blast doors in a flash. But Scotty's the one with engineering so amazing it actually breaks the laws of physics.



Wookiees have been known to tear people's arms out of their sockets, but Chewie's too teddy-bear cute for such behavior. Try to hug a Klingon, on the other hand, and he'll rip out your liver.



Ya gotta love a 23rd century space explorer with a big ol' beehive. But then again, who can resist a nice, firm set of buns? Leia's gravity-defying hair is one of *Star Wars*' best special effects.



Luke's 'do morphs from feathered '70s relic in *Star Wars* to comb-to-the-side mop-top in *Jedi*. For hair that never changes—or moves, or even looks like hair—you've got to go with Capt. Kirk's Tribble-pelt toupee.

GRUDGE MATCH

VS

WINNER TAKES ALL

match-up has to look at dollars and cents

Viacom International, Inc., which owns *Star Trek*, has raked in over \$2.5 billion in *Trek* product sales to date. *Star Trek* is watched in 75 countries and, according to Paramount calculations, has a weekly audience of more than 20 million viewers—most of whom are high-income, college-educated professionals. *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, launched in 1987, soon became the highest-rated first-run syndicated show in history. It lasted for seven seasons, and reruns continue to bring in cash. The eight *Trek* movies have earned more than \$900 million worldwide. The franchise also pumps out more than 50 new books a year and soaks up profits from more than 200 licensees offering video games, toys and gifts.

All that sounds mighty impressive... until it's stacked up against *Star Wars*' astronomical profit margin. Lucasfilm makes more than \$900 million a year. The first three *Star Wars* films have grossed more than \$1 billion in box-office receipts, while an estimated \$4.5 billion in other *Star Wars* merchandise has been sold, including 50 million videos. According to Ed Roth, president of leisure activities for the NPD Group, a marketing research company that tracks the toy industry, *Star Wars* toys raked in more than \$625 million in sales in 1997 compared to a \$54 million total for *Star Trek* toys.



All of this has made George Lucas one of the richest men in Hollywood. *Forbes* magazine recently declared him to be the second-richest entertainment mogul in the world, second only to Steven Spielberg. The magazine has estimated his worth at \$2 billion.

Trek might have had an 11-year head start, but in the battle of the bottom line, the Force is with *Wars*.

THE WINNER



OVERALL QUALITY

ROUND 1

Is it possible to judge the quality of one franchise against another? Sure it is. Would anyone dispute that the *Star Wars* trilogy is better than the *Look Who's Talking* trilogy? Or that the *Star Trek* franchise is superior to the *Police Academy* franchise? Of course not.

At first glance, *Wars* might seem to have a definitive edge over *Trek*. *Star Wars* ranked number 15 on the recent American Film Institute list of the top 100 movies of all time. Needless to say, no *Star Trek* film made it onto the list. Tally up the *Star Wars* films' ratings in Leonard Maltin's



screen accomplishments against those of *Star Trek*. Of the five *Trek* series, two—the original and *The Next Generation*—are widely regarded as TV classics. The others—the *Trek* cartoon, *Deep Space* and *Voyager*—have their flaws, but still rank high above typically cretinous TV fare like *Baywatch* or *Walker, Texas Ranger*.

Star Wars' TV outings, on the other hand, haven't been so successful. Most *Wars* loyalists would prefer to overlook the two mid-'80s TV movies, *The Ewok Adventure* and *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor*. The *Star Wars*-based cartoon shows *Droids* and *Ewoks* were

merely mediocre, at best. And it shouldn't be forgotten that *Wars* inspired the worst Christmas show ever, 1978's *Star Wars Holiday Special*, which mixed Luke, Han and the rest of the gang with "special guest stars" Harvey Korman, Bea Arthur and Jefferson Starship. In the final scene of this mind-blowing TV travesty, Princess Leia serenades a group of teary-eyed Wookiees. Such a crime against fandom cannot be forgiven, leaving the judges no choice but to declare this round a draw.

1998 *Movie & Video Guide* and the series gets a collective 3,666 stars out of a possible four. The eight *Trek* films average a mere 2,875 stars.

And it's not just critics who prefer the *Star Wars* films over *Star Trek*'s big-screen offerings. Visitors to the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) can rate movies on a scale of one to 10. Collectively, the *Wars* films pull a score of 8.5. The *Trek* series, on the other hand, rates a weak 6.7.

Though the *Tribune's* Wilmington admits that he has a soft spot for the original *Trek* series, he acknowledges that *Star Wars* is something the *Trek* franchise has yet to produce—an indisputable, bona fide movie classic. "The best of the (*Trek* movie) bunch are perhaps the fourth and second films," he says, "but they can only be regarded as classics in the sense that a movie like *Lassie Come Home* is a classic [for *Lassie* fans].

But Wilmington defends *Trek* by saying the comparison isn't fair. "You're talking about three *Star Wars* movies versus hundreds of TV shows and eight *Trek* movies," he points out. "There's no question that the *Star Wars* movies loom larger than the *Trek* ones, but the whole *Star Trek* universe is much vaster.

Keeping that in mind, it's only fair to pit *Star Trek*'s small-



ALIEN INSURRECTION

Forget Monday Night Football. The best sports show of all time was *Battle of the Network Stars*, the annual special that would pit '70s TV actors against each other. In tribute to those great Adrian Zmed/John Schneider matchups of yesteryear, here's a Battle of the *Trek*-*Wars* Aliens.



The spear-wielding Ewoks may be bigger and bipedal, but those ever-lovin' Tribbles can breed fast enough to smother their cuddly rivals. Projected winner: Tribbles.



Though Quark could con Jabba out of his barge, the Hutt could eat him for lunch...and probably would after stealing the exotic dancers from Quark's bar. Projected winner: Jabba.



The Wookiee gets the intelligence edge, but one head-butt from the space ape's poisoned horn and Chewie's a trophy rug instead of a big walking carpet. Projected winner: The mugato.



Lando Calrissian's brainiac buddy looked bright enough, but yank those groovy headphones off and he's just another member of the Hair Club for Men. Projected winner: Vulcans.



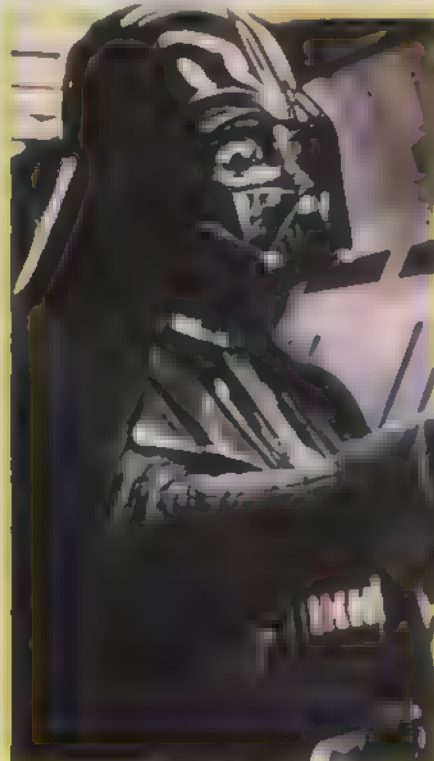
Yeah, the bounty hunter was pretty cool in *Empire*. But the Borg could assimilate the bumbling Boba seen in *Return of the Jedi* in a Coruscant minute. Projected winner: The Borg.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

ROUND 4

After three rounds of slugging it out, there's no clear champ yet. Both *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* each have won a round with another round judged a split decision. Appropriately enough, that means the final round—the fight for the future—will determine who gets carried out on the shoulders of adoring fans as a Rocky-style champ and who gets carted away on a stretcher.

Casual pop-culture observers might assume that *Trek* is set to live long and prosper. *Voyager* and *DS9* will return with new episodes this fall, and another *Trek* movie—titled *Star Trek: Insurrection* at press time—



is being prepped for a December 11 premiere. Meanwhile, reruns of the original series and *The Next Generation* continue to air around the world, ensuring that the franchise is well-nigh inescapable for anyone who's not living in a cave or Amish.

Terri Helton, senior VP/domestic licensing for Viacom Consumer Products, says that studies show *Star Trek* awareness in the U.S. to be as high as 98 percent. "It's right up there with Coca-Cola, and a very large percentage of people can name something about it," she says.

But before anyone proclaims *Trek* to be immortal, there are a few facts to keep in mind. *DS9*—a syndication success but never the phenomenon *Next Generation* was—will close up shop at the end of the next season.

CAGE MATCH

VS

WHICH IS THE VICTOR?



That will leave the ever-struggling *Voyager* to carry the *Trek* banner on first-run TV.

[*DS9* and *Voyager*] loyalists are not as strong as the loyalists for past shows," Helton admits, though she also insists that "*Star Trek* is as strong today as ever."

That might be true for the *Next Generation* cast, which is still flying high from the strong performance of the eighth *Trek* movie, *First Contact*. But the next *Trek* to the theaters will have to fight the curse of the odd numbers, the eerie jinx that made the first, third, fifth and seventh films the lamest of the series.

"Maybe they should just skip the odd-numbered ones, kind of like hotels do with the 13th floor," Wilmington jokes.

That would work if the jinx were the only thing *Trek* movie producers had to worry about. But they have another stumbling block to contend with—their own script. Insiders who've read the *Trek 9* screenplay describe the plot (about Picard and company trying to protect a magical "fountain of youth" planet from a nasty race of dying aliens) as silly and its attempts at humor as heavy-handed and juvenile. *First Contact* bounced back from its predecessor's soft box office thanks to good reviews and strong word of mouth. It's doubtful a sickly *Trek* could do the same.

But what of *Star Wars*? Could the upcoming prequel—due in theaters next May—overcome bad reviews?

Don't be silly.

Reviews won't matter. Quality won't matter. (Though given the cast—Liam Neeson, Ewan McGregor, Yoda—and Lucas' presence behind the camera as director, odds are it will be pretty cool.) World War III wouldn't matter. The only thing that will matter is that it's finally done.

Next year is *Star Wars*' year," says *License!* magazine associate editor Rob Felton. "Everybody is steering clear of May."

Looking for a sure thing in life? Here's one: The *Star Wars* prequel will be a smash.



This was no knockout. Both our contenders made it to the final bell on their feet. It was a clean fight, a fair fight, a good fight. But the judges have reached a decision. The reigning, undefeated champion of the science-fiction realm is

Star Wars.

Star Trek's got stamina, there's no doubt about it. Like Rocky Balboa, it's taken a lot of blows over the years without ever going down for the count. And it packs a powerful punch when it's swinging its best.

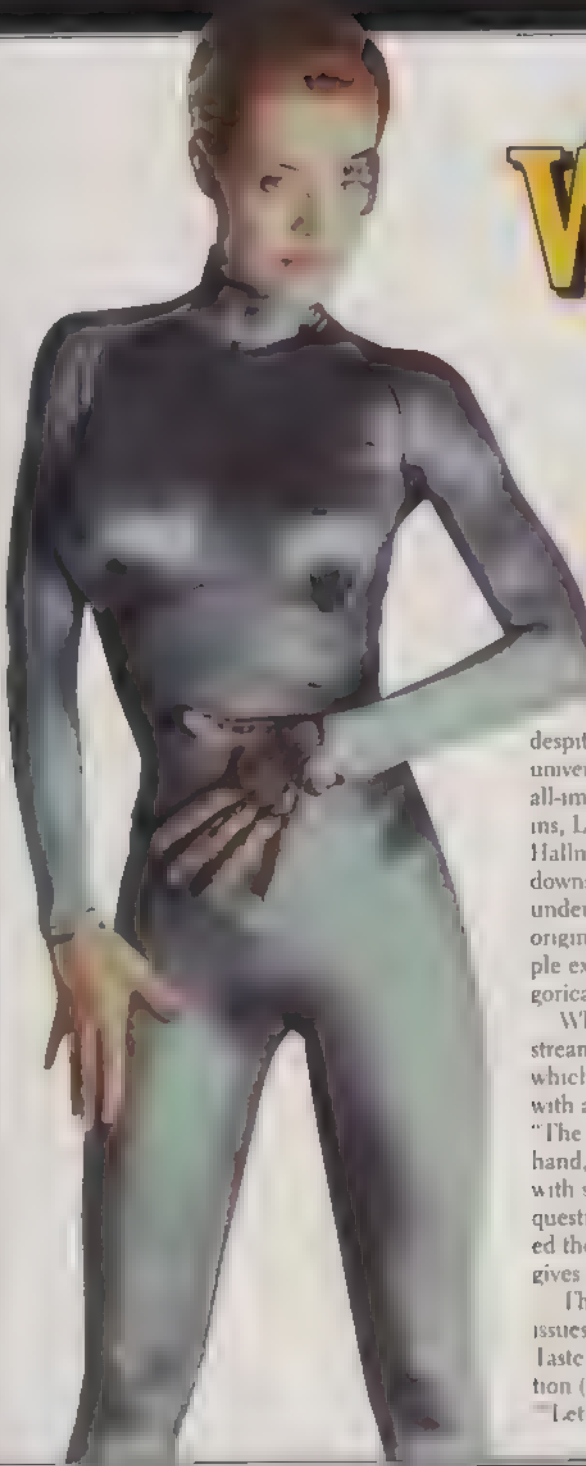
But who could get into the ring with *Star Wars* and triumph? *Alien*? *Batman*? *Jurassic Park*? No way. They're lightweights. Only a hungry young up-and-comer like *The X-Files* could hope to last more than a round. And *Star Wars* would still knock its block off before long. No, take *Star Trek* out of the running and there's just no competition.

So will *Wars* always reign supreme? Who knows? Even the legendary Muhammad Ali had to step aside for a new generation of fighters eventually.

Of course, that day is a long way off for *Star Wars*. Just as previous generations of sci-fi fans had their champions—Jules Verne, Flash Gordon, Isaac Asimov and, yes, *Star Trek*—our generation has its champ, too.

Long may it reign. ♦





WAR OF THE

Überfants Ed Gross—
opposing sides in the

EDWARD “KLINGON CRUSHER” GROSS

For three decades, *Star Trek* has managed to transcend its humble beginnings as a failed television show to touch the imagination of multiple generations. And despite the fact that Gene Roddenberry's universe has become Viacom International's all-important cash cow (with product tie-ins, Las Vegas amusement attractions, Hallmark Christmas ornaments, crack downs on unauthorized fan websites), the underlying appeal remains Roddenberry's original goal: to chronicle a group of people exploring modern issues through allegorical tales set in outer space.

While there's no denying the mainstream appeal of George Lucas' *Star Wars*, which is devoted to slam-bang adventures with a bit of philosophy thrown in via "The Force," *Star Trek*, on the other hand, has spent much of its time wrestling with some of society's most important questions. While this has somewhat limited the franchise's appeal, it also is what gives it that underlying strength.

The original series tackled a variety of issues, including the Vietnam War ("A Taste of Armageddon"), genetic manipulation ("Space Seed"), racial intolerance ("Let That Be Your Last Battlefield"),

aging ("The Deadly Years") and the nature of love ("Metamorphosis"). Its first spin-off, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, while often more melodramatic than its predecessor, nonetheless managed to explore the temptation of power ("Hide & Q"), the plight of Vietnam veterans ("The Hunted"), and technology's grip over humanity ("Q Who," "Best of Both Worlds"). The feature film *Star Trek Generations* tackled mortality and the current television spin-offs also delve into weighty matters. *Star Trek: Voyager* featured several episodes with the organ-stealing Vidians (a race suffering from an AIDS-like degenerative disease that could only be combated by harvesting organs from healthy victims), while much of *Deep Space Nine's* thematic material has been devoted to exploring the impact war has on the human spirit and asking what levels people will rise or sink to in times of violent crisis.

While it's true that *Star Trek* probably will never reach as large of an audience as *Star Wars* does, it still spends a great deal of its time attempting to dig deeper, struggling valiantly to bring us a little closer to ourselves. ♦

★ FAN ★ FRICTION

CINESCAPE ONLINE readers jump
into the *Star Trek*/*Star Wars* brawl

"If one is looking for more story and less eye candy, *Star Trek* wins. *Trek* is about the development of people and society. The FX are less sophisticated, but the story content makes up for that." —Thomas Redfern, Manchester, Tenn.

"Sure, it's entertaining and intelligently written, but *Trek* just isn't cool. *Wars* has better adventure, humor, aliens, robots, spaceships,

battles, romance and dialogue. And most importantly, it has a story we can all connect with and understand easily." —Paul Potiki, Dunedin, New Zealand

Star Wars wouldn't even exist without *Star Trek*, which started the sci-fi craze. *Star Trek* has survived for 30 years and is still the best science-fiction show ever." —Robert David Tenney, Chugiak, Alaska

NEW WORDS

id-Mark Altman take
Trek vs. Wars debate

MARK "THE JEDI GIANT" ALTMAN

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.... That line marks the beginning of a great adventure—audiences being spirited into a distant world filled with Star Destroyers, midget sages and menacing bounty hunters. More than 20 years after its release, *Star Wars* continues to resonate because rarely, if ever, has a filmmaker's imagination given birth to a more vividly realized universe. Over the course of three movies, George Lucas created a cosmic playground where every detail was completely thought out and fantastically realized. Nothing in the *Star Wars* universe seems out of place or like a remnant from Space Age Props, Inc. Nothing takes you out of the reality of the film to remind you that you're sitting in a movie theater.

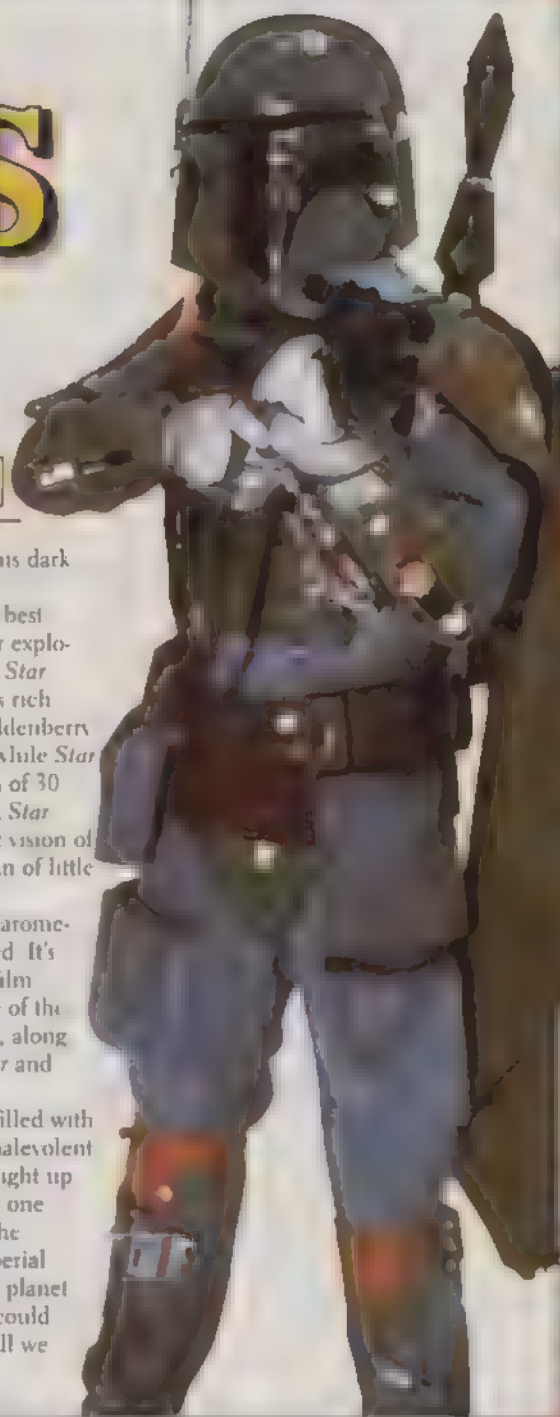
Star Wars raised the bar for cinematic entertainment, with the mythic archetypes that Lucas used giving the characters a complexity lacking in their pulp-movie counterparts. Luke Skywalker wasn't just a naive-farmboy-turned-reluctant-hero, but a figure who had to confront the dilemma of potential fratricide. Obi-Wan Kenobi wrestled with the mistakes of his past. Han Solo shed his materialistic shell for the greater good. And Anakin Skywalker

had to transcend the shadow of his dark side. Darth Vader.

Star Wars is space opera at its best. While it lacks the deep character exploration that a recurring series like *Star Trek* can deliver, its universe is as rich and diverse as the one Gene Roddenberry conceived back in the '60s. But while *Star Trek* has developed over the span of 30 years with myriad creative artists, *Star Wars* is the result of the auteurist vision of one man, developed over the span of little more than six hours.

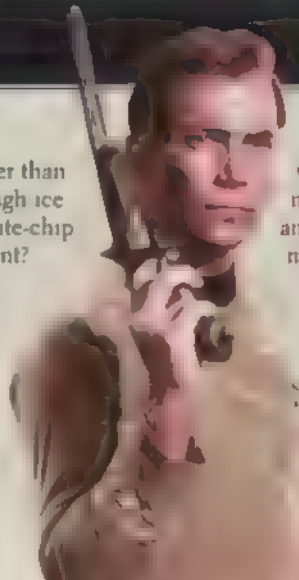
Star Wars always will be the barometer by which future sci-fi is judged. It's no accident that the American Film Institute honored the film as one of the 100 greatest American films ever, along with *Citizen Kane*, *The Godfather* and *Gone With the Wind*.

The series is larger than life, filled with bombastic music, bold heroes, malevolent villains and cool technology. Caught up in the plot's surging momentum, one never has time to question why the Empire would use unwieldy Imperial Walkers on the surface of a snow planet or build a giant Death Star that could be destroyed by a tiny X-Wing. All we knew was that it was cool. ♦



"Is Wilma Flintstone sexier than Jane Jetson? Is cookie dough ice cream better than chocolate-chip ice cream? What's the point? [Nevertheless] I vote for *Trek*!" —Joel Barrot Smart, Florence, S.C.

"No comparison should be made. To quote *Saturday Night Live* superfan George Wendt



when contemplating a match between the Bears and the Bulls. 'A clash of this magnitude would destroy mankind as we know it.'"
—Daniel Striphongs, Riverside, Calif.

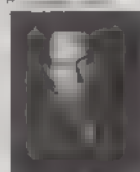
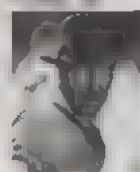
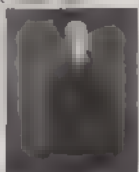
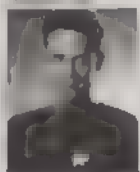
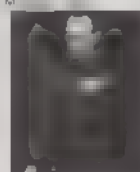
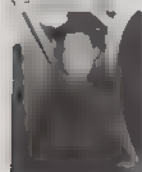
"What's this nonsense about not comparing things just because they're different? There

can be no argument—*Star Wars* rules." —Sander de Regt, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

"*Trek* is better because it is produced with more intelligence. *Wars* is a space opera; *Trek* is a space drama." —William Foley, New Brunswick, N.J.

"No one can exploit midgets like George Lucas." —Tom Rantas, Ridgewood, N.J. ♦

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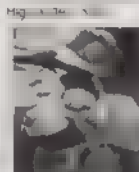
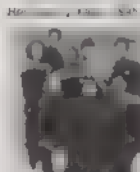
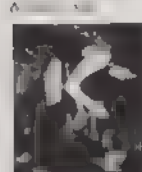
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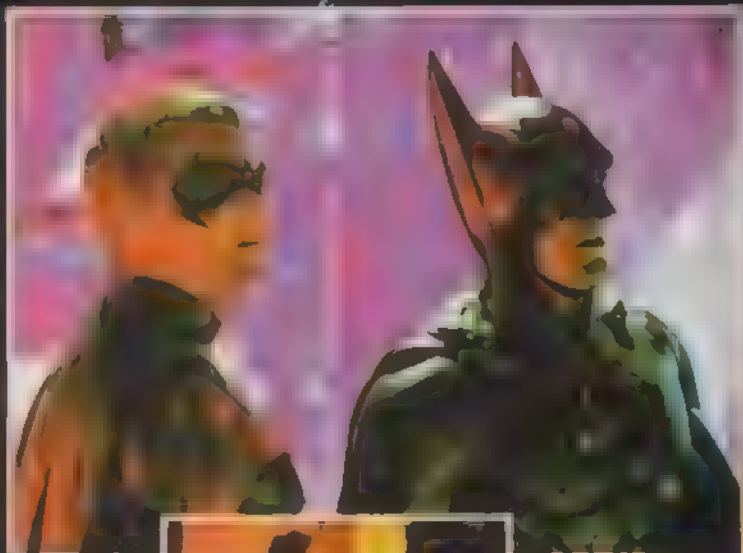
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Hit-starved studios **greenlight**
a slew of new sequels



B

In the words of a character in *Screen 2*: "Sequels are. By definition, they're inferior films."

Sure, screenwriter Kevin Williamson was trying to make a clever, self-referential crack. But for a time, Hollywood seemed to agree with him: Since the *Batman II* fiasco and *Speed 2*, Cruise Control debacles last June, studios shied away from sequels in favor of bankrolling more original fare. Actors railed against being typecast, directors talked about expanding their range, moguls tubthumped the virtues of not running old ideas into the ground. Sequels, as one industry analyst puts it, were the "kiss of death."

Until now. Sequel fever suddenly has become an epidemic in Tinseltown, as the same studios, directors and stars who turned their surgically altered noses up at reprising past glories now want to unleash an onslaught of new sequels onto the big screen.

And we're not talking *Event Horizon 2* or *Return to Sphero* here, either. Instead, expect continuations of blockbuster franchises—a fourth Indiana Jones movie, another *Die Hard*, *Jurassic Park 3* and *Alien 5*. Meanwhile, Sly Stallone will make another *Rambo* film (and has considered taking his gloves up for *Rocky 6*), Kurt Russell may rejuvenate *Satan* and Arnold Schwarzenegger is hinting that he'd like to appear in *Terminator 3* and a new *Conan the Barbarian* adventure.

The crown jewel of these revived franchises, of course, is *Indy 4*. Since the third installment of the series was released way back in 1989, wiseful fans have been speculating and circulating ideas and unfounded rumors about a new project. Just as it seemed as if a suitable script would never come along (and that Harrison Ford was getting too long in the tooth to crack that whip again anyway), whispers concerning a sequel re-teaming Ford and Sean Connery started making the Internet rounds.

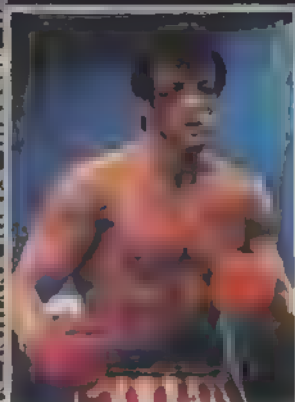
But this latest spate of sequel talk looks like it's the real deal: Plans for the reprise are coming straight from the director's mouth.

"The *Indiana Jones 4* hat is halfway on my head," Steven Spielberg says. "I have the plot worked out." He adds that filming might start in the summer of 2000, after he finishes

REPEAT

BY ANNABELLE VILLANUEVA & CINDY PEARLMAN

Business



MORE FOR THE MONEY Hollywood is pondering a potpourri of sequels, including more *Alien* action for Ellen Ripley [top], a return to the ring for Rocky [above], another *Lethal* adventure for Martin Riggs [right] and a third visit to Jurassic Park [right]

Memoirs of a Geisha and another as-yet-unannounced project next summer

While Spielberg won't divulge any more information about the script, it's clear he doesn't need to worry about luring his star back to the franchise. Although Harrison Ford vociferously complains about the shadow of Han Solo, he has no qualms about donning Indy's fedora one more time.

I would do [Indy 4] in a New York minute," says Ford, (who also recently signed on for *The Sum of All Fears*, his fourth Jack Ryan thriller) "I would love to do that character again. It's one of my favorites." In fact, Ford hints that the speculation surrounding Connery's return to the franchise also is true. "I'm also looking forward to working with Sean Connery again," Ford reveals. "He makes a great screen dad."

If that weren't enough, Spielberg fans sent into a frenzy over the upcoming Indy adventure might need to be hospitalized when they hear the following news: Before Spielberg tackles the intrepid archeologist, he plans to oversee another trip to Jurassic Park. Universal Pictures officially announced that the studio has begun development of a third *Jurassic Park* film. This time, though, Spielberg has only signed on as the movie's producer; Michael Crichton will return to develop the story for this third dino outing.

Little else is known about Universal's gameplan. Apparently, Jeff Goldblum, the star of the first two films, has no obligation to appear in a third installment and reportedly hasn't indicated whether or not he'll return to the Ian Malcolm role. Currently there aren't any directors attached to the project, either, but the movie still could be ready as early as the summer of 2000.

We have an opportunity to build on the experience and excitement that audiences have come to expect from us," Spielberg says. "([Michael Crichton and I] have had great success together and look forward to

continuing our association." They probably also look forward to their payday. The first two *Jurassic Park* films have generated more than \$1.5 billion in combined worldwide box-office revenue.

Even as Spielberg finalizes plans for *Jurassic Park 3* and *Indiana Jones 4*, Bruce Willis confirmed he'll be breathing new life into his own blockbuster franchise. Expect cameras to start rolling on *Die Hard 4* sometime next year, as the actor plans to surprise anyone dubious about how John McClane keeps stumbling over terrorists in confined spaces.

It's a whole different take on action films," Willis told the *Boston Globe*. "It's going to be set in a jungle—all low-tech and no guns. It's still the theme of an ordinary guy in extraordinary circumstances."

The man-against-nature story was a sticking point for the actor, who insisted that 20th Century Fox choose a script free of high-tech toys. The movie reportedly takes place in Brazil, and Willis' *Armageddon* buddy Ben Affleck is considering signing on as Willis' sidekick.

Never one to be outdone, Arnold Schwarzenegger's begun looking to the past for ways to revive his sagging career. Apparently, the sequel bug bit him after a trip to an amusement park. It felt right when we got back together to do a short *Terminator* film for the ride at Universal Studios," Arnold says. "I'm not sure if we will do another *Terminator* film, but I wouldn't rule it out."

Still, the big guy's quick to point out that he wouldn't consider a sequel unless James Cameron hitched himself to the project. "I wouldn't do it without Cameron," Arnold admits. While admirable, his loyalty might keep a Schwarzenegger-led sequel stuck in an indefinite holding pattern. Cameron's told the press he's not interested in T3, although he's given Arnold his blessing to make the film with another director. But during media tours for *Titanic*, the king of the world did hint that he'd be more interested in pursuing another *True Lies* movie because he feels he could find other stories for those characters.

But Arnie's not done—there's been some speculation that the actor also longs to return to his barbarian roots in a third and final Conan movie. The story would be based on the tales of an elder Conan who has ascended to the throne of Aquilonia and faces political intrigue (along with the usual swordplay and sorcery). This time Schwarzenegger wants to direct as well, but it realistically may take years for the project to get rolling.

Meanwhile, fellow muscle-bound '80s action hero Sylvester Stallone is dusting off some old properties himself, as a Rambo sequel looks more and more likely.

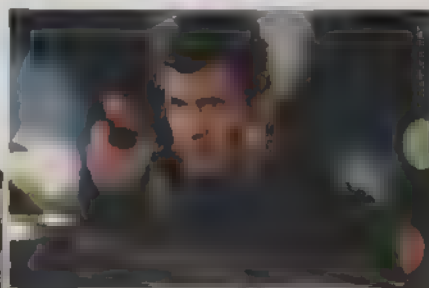
Miramax genre arm Dimension Films which picked up a number of rights during the Carolco Pictures fire-sale, has decided to move ahead with another Rambo movie after paying \$500,000 for the rights. Stallone hasn't officially signed on to the movie, but he concedes that he will return to the role and hopes the film will show a less-violent Rambo, as the character takes off his bandanna and tries to adapt to the '90s by using brains (?) and not just brawn. Stallone also has said that he's mulling over jumping back in the ring as Rocky; he's thinking of having the aging fighter try to revive his career in *Rocky V*.

Another franchise that may be poised for a comeback is *Batman*. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Joel Schumacher and Warner Bros. have discussed bringing the Caped Crusader back, despite the critical drubbing received by *Batman & Robin*. The director said he'd like to return to the character's dark comic-book roots. The newspaper went on to repeat unconfirmed

arguably being the only exceptions). Sequels usually lack the freshness and inspiration of the original, and after a while, audiences—and filmmakers—do get tired. After all, is there really anything gained by seeing Rocky punch someone else out or another island full of CGI dinosaurs?

"I didn't have anything to do with *Alien Resurrection*," says *Supernova* director Walter Hill, who is credited as the producer of every film in the *Alien* series. "I haven't even seen it, to tell you the truth. We had somewhat of a falling out with the studio about the notion of the undertaking. I thought we should quit."

Alien II was an honorable conclusion to what should have been the series," Hill continues. "I never really quite understood what the overriding reason was to get back into it."



everyone will be interested because the properties haven't been around for a while. But the excitement [for the other sequels] is not mainstream."

Regardless, until studios start showing big losses, they'll probably bank on sequels for some time to come. And they're not just looking to replicate event films—Columbia pictures is planning on a *Jumanji* franchise, New Line has heard a proposal from comic-book creator Todd McFarlane about a second *Spawn* and is banking on more Austin Powers comedies from Mike Myers. Meanwhile, there are plenty of fans who are keeping their fingers crossed in the hope that one day *Twister 2*, *Men in Black 2* and *Predator 2* all become realities.

As long as there's enough audience interest—and money to be made—it's likely that more top-notch directors and stars will attach themselves to sequels. When Mel Gibson was asked why he did *Lethal Weapon 4*, he joked, "I have kids to put through college." However, he was quick



rumors that Kurt Russell had been approached for the lead role.

There also have been reports that Sigourney Weaver has signed a multimillion-dollar contract to reprise her role of Ripley in a fifth *Alien* film, even amid rumors that Fox was killing the franchise because of *Alien Resurrection's* lackluster performance in North American theaters. Which brings up the dark side of sequel-mania—almost all of these franchises have seen a steady decline in quality with each successive film. *Aliens* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*

except obviously [the] monetary reasons.

Dollars aren't the only thing fueling sequels—a general lack of creativity and the instability in the film market are forcing studios to go back to the same wells over and over again.

"I think [Hollywood] is running out of ideas," says Robert Bucksbaum of Reel Source Inc., a box-office analysis firm. "It's a no-brainer that you're going to make some money off of sequels because you know what you're going to get. If you do a sequel to *Terminator* or *Indiana Jones*

to add that his decision to return as Riggs was not just motivated by greenbacks. "We wanted years to do this sequel," he says.

"We wanted to wait until the time was right. Sometimes it takes a long time until you think of a good storyline." Gibson adds that he may be interested in filming another *Maverick* movie, as well.

And when asked if he will do any more *Lethal Weapon* movies, Gibson definitely expresses Hollywood's latest attitude. "Oh I only have three or four left in me," he says with a smile. ♦

CINESCAPES

FALL

1998

TV

PREVIEW

BY THE EDITORS
OF CINESCAPE



Every autumn they parade onto our television screens like the proverbial lambs to the slaughter. Their hopes, big ratings. *Entertainment Weekly* cover stories, spin-offs, deals for lunchboxes and action figures.

Their probable fate isn't so pretty. Just ask the producers of last year's lambs, *Sleepwalkers*, *TimeCop* and *The Visitor*.

Of course, failure isn't an inevitability. Shows like *Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine* have the backing of a powerful pop-culture dynasty. Sometimes an off-beat new show can find a workable niche for itself, like two survivors from last season's ratings wars, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Earth: Final Conflict*. And there's even the chance that a worthwhile series will survive and thrive long enough to grow into a mighty franchise, just like *The X-Files*.

So will the cream of this season's genre crop—*Mercy Point*, *Brimstone*, *Seven Days* and *Highlander: The Raven*—produce another *X-Files*? And how will the grizzled veterans handle the competition? Stay tuned.





Fantasy VOYAGE

BORG BEAUTY SEVEN OF
VOYAGER FROM BECOMING



Anyone who doubted that the addition of a single cast member could save *Star Trek: Voyager* from its ennui state hadn't seen Jeri Ryan. Thanks to her Borg queen *Seven of Nine*, *Voyager* has managed to reclaim its edge. And it wasn't just because Ryan poured herself into a silver spandex bodysuit. The character's nearly indestructible strength and her constant feeling that all hell could break loose at any moment.

Members of those who created *Seven of Nine*, including *Voyager* producer Mike Martin, felt that by the third season that the series needed some new blood, their team turned to Gene Roddenberry's unique model of character development for inspiration.

One of the things that we were very conscious of was the way Roddenberry created characters. That was very simple but had a lot of potential," Menosky explains. "Data — what could be simpler than Pinocchio, a little wooden puppet who wants to be a boy? In this case, we came up with the inspiring image of a wolf child. Wolves are considered very dangerous and evil creatures in fairy tales, [but] there is still something very elevated about the notion that [a character] once lived among the wolves and survived. That allowed us to write her with a kind of arrogance."

Despite the fact that she's a villain, *Seven of Nine* always felt strong from the start. She had a very strong, very great, and that's good. And it's not like you have to read a book to understand her. It doesn't matter because it's a character that's so dynamic and dynamic to that character.

In particular, *Seven's* relationship with Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) was a key. "So being akin to the Kirk/Spock dynamic of the original *Star Trek*, 'Janeway comes off really well in her scenes with *Seven of Nine*. The



ic



NINE SAVED
LOST IN SPACE

slightly off-the-cuff, at times almost obsessed captain dovetailed perfectly with Seven of Nine's arrival. As a result, the captain's character was strengthened. "Kate Mulgrew said she's never been happier," Menosky says.

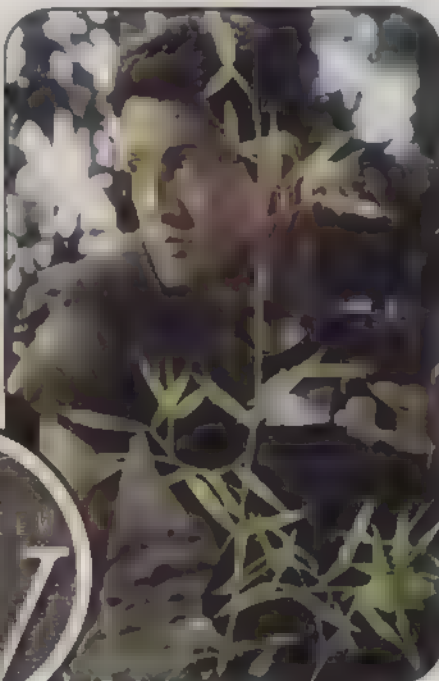
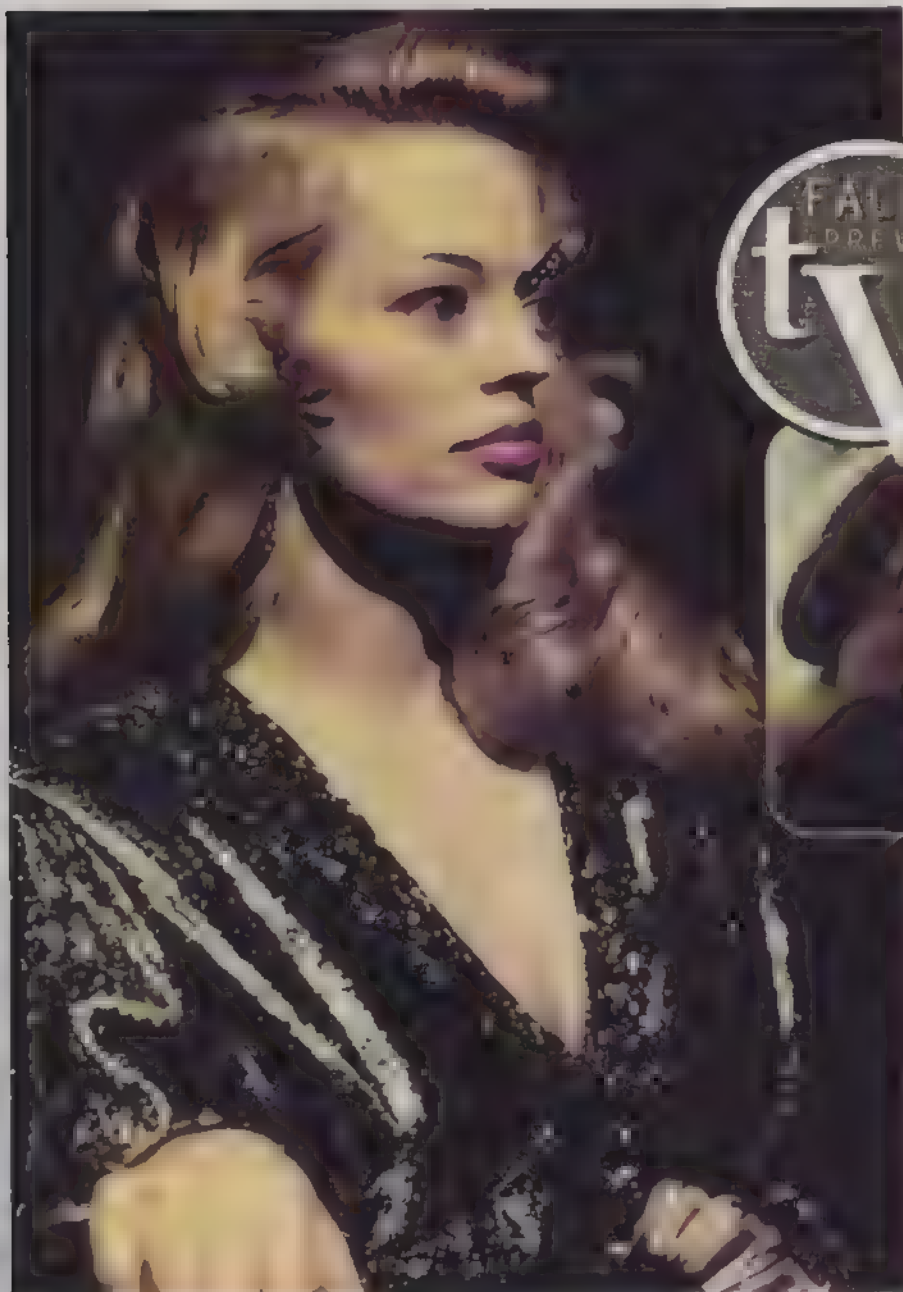
The producing team is determined to prevent *Voyager* from turning into *The Jeri Ryan Show*, however, and will shift the course of the narrative accordingly. Seven of Nine will still play a vital role in the scheme of things, but the storyline will shift its primary focus back to the rest of the ship's crew. "We may have gone a little excessively in the direction of Seven of Nine, but it was for creative reasons. She allowed us to see the other characters in a

different light," Menosky says. "In the upcoming season, we've redressed that balance in almost the other direction, focusing on many of the other characters."

What direction the storyline will take, though, is anyone's guess. Last season's exciting finale left the writers with few loose strands to explore. Jeri Ryan has expressed concern that Seven of Nine's early prominence in the series might create problems for her character in the future, and Mulgrew has stated publicly that she would like to see Janeway's ongoing relationship with Commander Chakotay (Robert Beltran) finally resolved. In the much less official world of rumors, reports have been hinting for some time

that *Voyager* will finally return to Earth.

At this point, though, there isn't any single overall vision guiding *Voyager*, Menosky says. Even the exact route of next season's journey has not been precisely mapped, leaving plenty of room for speculation. "We just have the vaguest



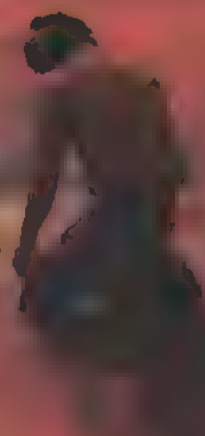
idea of where we're going," he laughs.

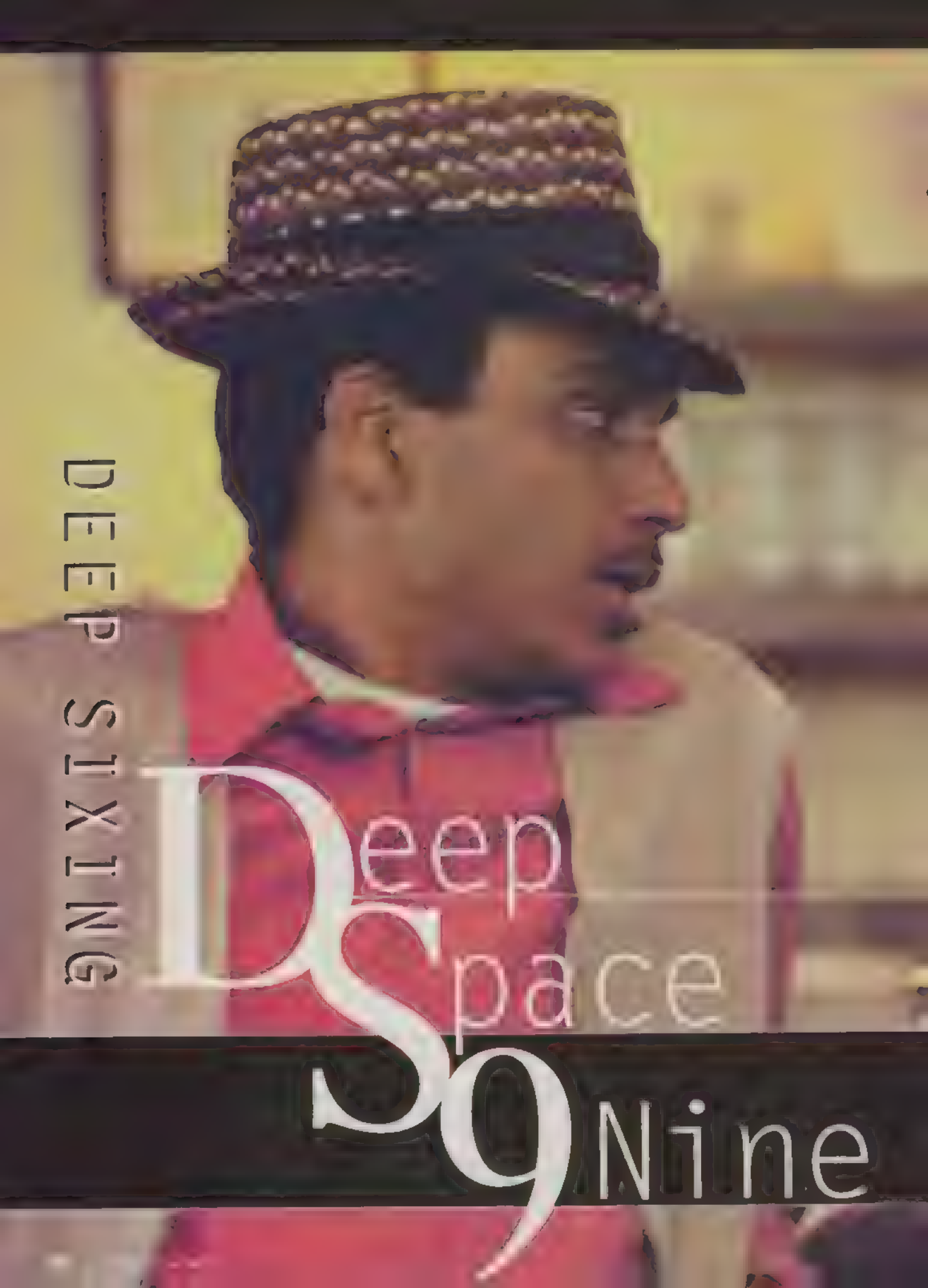
As vague as you can imagine. In series co-founder and former executive producer Jeri Taylor's old office, on the dry erase board, there's a tiny little corner that will say, "The Neelix character make better." It's about as vague as that. "We know that we like the idea of new alien species and dealing with them in stand-alone and mini-arc storylines. The truth is, we really do wing it and go episode by episode. In general, writers are always under the gun, always winging it. You just kind of hope for some inspiration along the way." ♦

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A man with a mustache, wearing a red shirt and a brown and white patterned hat, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with warm lighting.

DEEP SIXING

Deep
space
So Nine



ER. IRA STEVEN BEHR PONDER DS9'S FINAL TOUR OF DUTY

You're going to miss us when we're gone," proclaims Ira Steven Behr, the guiding force behind *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, as the series embarks on its seventh—and final—season. And he's right. While the much-maligned black sheep of the *Trek* franchise never really received the respect many genre devotees felt it deserved, it did manage to cultivate a small but devout following with its unique blend of technospeak and character-driven drama.

Even at this early stage in the production schedule, Behr, for one, is a little misty-eyed. "Without overstating it," he notes, "I would say that we all feel it every day. There are a lot of jokes

being made, like, 'This is the first casting session of the last season; the last first pre-production meeting; that kind of thing. But everybody—especially the writing staff—knows we've been really lucky to be able to do this show. None of us can be really sure we're going to have an opportunity like this again, to have this kind of creative freedom.' It's going to be an emotional year."

Emotional and challenging. Jadzia Dax's untimely demise in the sixth season finale (written into the storyline when actress Terry Farrell left the series over a salary dispute) was only one of the narrative shifts the writing team had to address in the



upcoming season. This year, Sisko (Jeri Brooks) must rebuild his life after he makes a choice that results in the apparent destruction of the wormhole and the Prophets.

"We had always been talking about Sisko going home and the wormhole disappearing, as well as the wormhole aliens vanishing," Behr explains. "The original idea was that the Prophets were dead, even though I felt that towards the end of the last season we'd bring them back. But because the Dax thing became so heavy, we had to leave some sense of hope. So instead of sending Sisko off a totally broken man, which was the original concept, he's a man going off to make things right."

Dax's death, however, offered a new set of creative opportunities. Actress Nicole deBoer will join the DS9 cast as Ezri Dax, a young woman who is essentially in the wrong place at the wrong time. As the only Trill on board a shuttle bringing Jadzia's symbiont back to the homeworld when its life is threatened, she is forced to become the newest Dax.

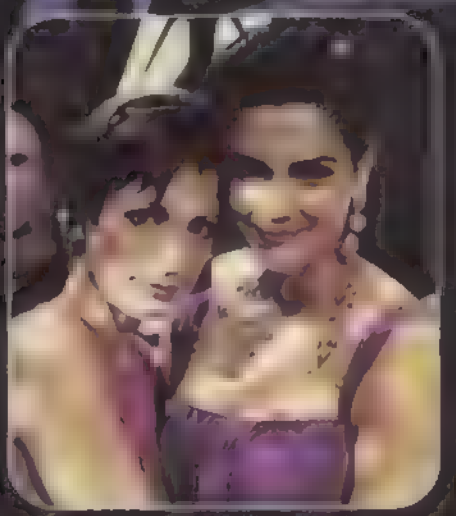
"She's had no training," Behr offers, "and she can't deal with all the personalities that are talking to her in her head at the same time. So suddenly she's all these different people, yet not these people. She has all these memories and people's habits and things like that. On top of everything else, she was an assistant ship's counselor, so it's the therapist who's more screwed up than the patients. This allows us to play the counselor in a much more creative way."

Although some of the events in store for season seven are obvious, the way DS9 will conclude is still top secret. And Behr would like to keep it that way, at least for now, although he fully expects the onslaught of controversy that the series finale will likely generate.

"There's no way," Behr says, "as we've learned so many times, that we're going to please everybody. There's no way we're going to do everyone's and cross everybody's. As soon as it's over, everyone's going to start pointing to what we missed and what threads are still dangling. But certainly the idea is to do the best job possible and try and make it satisfying, making sure that everyone realizes that it really was this wonderful saga about this captain's journey

exterior and interior—and the lives of all the crew. I think we will be able to do that."

Behr has reason to believe that his goal for the end of the series will be met because of the impressive standard the show main-



tained for the duration of its run. "It is a story, one big story," he says. "You can watch all the episodes straight through. We go on little tangents and little tributaries, but the great river of *Deep Space*

Nine flows along. It's a story, and that's why the end is going to be so emotional. These characters have become so real for me—I'm talking about everyone from the main characters down to people like Weyoun and General Martok. You feel like you've lived a portion of their lives with them and not just a series of episodes.

"I haven't seen most of the actors yet, so I don't know what their feelings are, but I'm sure their points of view about the ending are very different," Behr continues. "I hope the actors on *Deep Space Nine* are aware that when all is said and done, it is a pretty goddamned good gig, and I hope they can enjoy the last season because we're going to be doing our best to enjoy it."

Diehard fans should take heart in Behr's optimism, even as the countdown to the season finale begins. While nothing is yet written in stone, there is, at least, a slight possibility of life after the series' death for some DS9 characters.

No one has mentioned this to me, but my guess is that as they continue the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* films once we're off the air, I wouldn't be sur-

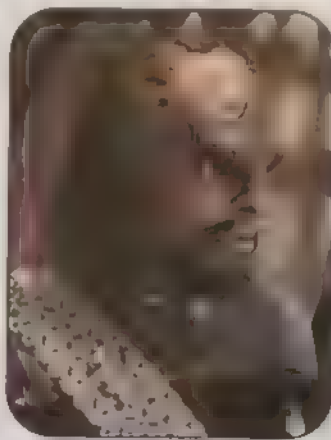
prised to see characters or themes from *Deep Space Nine* show up in those movies in some way, Behr speculates. "I don't know if any of that's true, but we're certainly not going to kill the entire cast at the end of the season. There will still be a space station."

What there won't be come fall 1999 are two *Star Trek* series competing for ratings. During its broadcast history, DS9 had a mere six months between the end of TNG and the debut of *Voyager* when it was the only *Trek* series on the air. Once the series ends, *Voyager* will have the playing field all to itself.

"There has not been a single mention of a new show," says Behr.

The plan is for *Voyager* to be the only show. "I wish we had that chance. That would have been nice, but on the other hand, we are such a

strange little cult show. I like the fact that when I meet [*Deep Space Nine* fans] they really like the show and get it. That's a wonderful feeling." ♦



"Freedom
is
an
illusion."

--Colossus



The X-FILES

FBI special agents Mulder and Scully's lives seemed poised on the brink of change, and not just because their first big-screen *X-Files* outing didn't generate the kind of bucks 20th Century Fox had hoped it would.

At the beginning of its sixth season, modern sci-fi's favorite series is in trouble. David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson have both spoken openly about their desires to pursue other projects. "I would have liked this past season to be the last. I'd rather be in a franchise movie series than do the TV show every week," Duchovny said in a recent interview with *Entertainment Weekly*.

Possibly preparing for the end of an era, *X-Files* creator Chris Carter introduced new faces into the cast during season five and has already begun to drop hints that certain supporting characters will become increasingly important. Complicating matters further, the show moved from Vancouver to Los

Angeles this summer, leaving behind the devoted production team that helped bring *The X-Files* to international acclaim.

In the midst of all the rumbling, *The X-Files* co-executive producer Frank Spotnitz is quite calm. He and Carter have already begun to craft many of the story arcs for season six, and things are running smoothly.

"There's going to be a total integration of the movie and where we left off in the TV series," Spotnitz says, adding that more stories set in the American Southwest and around a visit to Area 51 might be on the horizon this season.

It's not exactly in keeping with the standard don't-mess-with-a-good-thing television philosophy, and after a spate of weak episodes last season, fans might have reason to be worried. Then again, back in 1993, no one ever thought the obscure series starring two relative unknowns would nab multiple Emmy awards, either. ☼



COLOSSUS

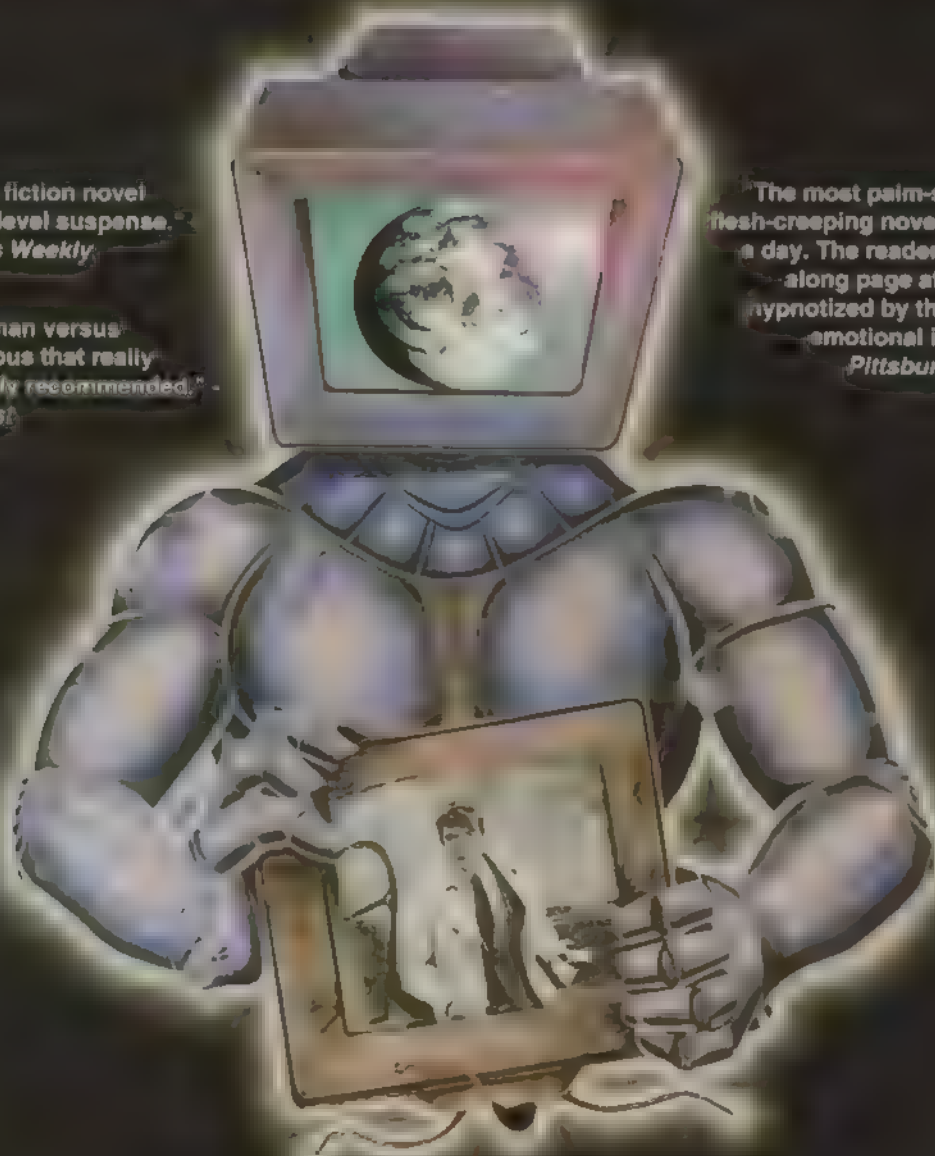
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Leave it to Joss Whedon and crew to finally recognize that high school is hell — the social awkwardness, the popularity contests, the vampires. But while bloodsuckers are still on the loose in Sunnydale, the third season of the increasingly popular *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* will take time to examine the less supernatural woes of school days, says co-executive producer David Greenwalt.

BUFFY

the Vampire SLAYER

"We have some spanking good ideas for the coming season," Greenwalt promises. "One of our big things is that it's senior year for all our characters, so it's the last prom, the last homecoming, in a sense the last graduation. It's certainly our last chance to explore the real hell that is high school. That will figure very big in the season, challenging people, putting the group to tests of loyalty." There are two forces at work," he continues. "One is, we're really growing up now. We will be going out into the world. Next year they will be college or a pizza delivery job."

At the same time our last chance to hold onto adolescent youth. Those two forces will be played off one another."

As if deciding what to wear to the prom weren't difficult enough, Buffy's long-lost love Angel will return from beyond, treacherous Spike and Drusilla will make unscheduled appearances and a new villain will arrive in town to ensure that

the gang doesn't have too many opportunities to enjoy the traditional football game or pep rally.

Despite all the changes, however, fans will be treated to more of Buffy's unique blend of drama, horror and humor, Greenwalt says. "People are going to suffer and fight and chuckle just as they have been doing, only more so," he quips.

That sound you're hearing is undoubtedly the laughter of the late science-fiction guru Gene Roddenberry coming from somewhere beyond the Final Frontier. Small wonder: Many of his premises that were rejected by network executives back in the '70s are gaining new life as we approach the next millennium.

Last year, *Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict*, based on a script he wrote more than 20 years earlier, became the highest-rated new series in first-run syndication. The show was classic

Earth: Final Conflict

Roddenberry, showcasing androgynous aliens known as the Taelons who live among humanity as supposed friends but in reality have an agenda all their own. In year one, the show chronicled the exploits of William Boone (Kevin Kilner), who walked the razor's edge between serving the Taelons and working with the human resistance movement dedicated to exposing the aliens' true motives. Thanks to its inventive mix of adventure, mysticism and sci-fi, viewers went for the show in a big way. With such strong ratings for a fledgling series, who could complain?

Apparently, the show's producers could. Rather than playing it safe, the creative team shook things up and promptly disposed of their leading man. The decision surprised even *Earth: Final Conflict* star Lisa Howard, who portrays Captain Lili Marquette, a Marine fighter pilot who works with the aliens and the resistance, just as Boone did. "The producers are very brave to take a show that's already a success and not say, 'It's a success, let's not mess with it.' Usually you get good numbers and you get blinded by them, feeling sort of infallible," Howard says. "Instead, they respect our audience enough to say, 'Okay, we liked it, but we can do better.'"

Rather than focus on one man's quest, as the series did last season, *Earth: Final Conflict* will take on more of an ensemble feel, examining the relationships between the characters and what happens to them under extreme pressure. "This year we're focusing much more on the 'conflict' aspect of the show, and the episodes are really moving now," Howard explains.

"One thing that drove everybody crazy last year was that the pacing was too slow," she continues. "This year even the scenes are quicker, which is good because I don't think we could have gotten away with telling the kind of stories we did last year again in the second season. I think the audience needs to be jolted a bit, and I really commend the producers on their creative bravery in making adjustments to the show. Truthfully, it's a very vibrant atmosphere to work in." ♦



tv



B RIMSTONE

Investing in the supernatural has paid off for Fox. A sizeable percentage of the network's growing strength has come from the popularity of paranormal successes like *The X-Files* and *Millennium*, not to mention the most frightening programming of all—multiple installments of *When Animals Attack*. Looking again to the outer limits for source material, the network launches its most otherworldly offering yet, *Brimstone*, starring Peter Horton.

In fact, Horton's character, former detective Ezekiel Stone, might qualify as the most unnatural leading man on television. As the series begins, Stone is already dead, killed in the line of duty. But the seemingly honest cop is condemned to hell anyway. His crime?

Murdering the man who savagely raped his wife. But when 113 inmates escape from Hades, Satan offers Stone one final chance at redemption if he can return the prisoners to the fiery gates.

Co-executive producer Ethan Reiff originally dreamed up the concept for *Brimstone* with partner Cyrus Nowrasteh in the form of a screenplay titled *Living Hell*, in which a pair of lovers are wrongly sent to hell and, after escape, only to be pursued by the devil's enforcer. But after some time, Reiff reconsidered the idea.

"We stopped and said, 'I'm so sick of seeing the innocent or wrongly accused. Let's have it be that whoever escaped from hell deserved to be there—a criminal who

deserved it and the hellish policeman sent to get him is actually the hero,'" he says. "In some ways, as we got older we seemed to have become more social reactionaries, embracing a more draconian philosophy. We wanted to see somebody punished and get what they deserved."

But the series is more than just *Wanted—Dead or Alive* for the damned. "There's also the supernatural element, which [we] refer to as religious magic," Reiff continues. "That aspect of the show allows us to keep a slightly escapist, fun genre element to it, while not going totally overboard into the comic-book realm. All of that is key to making sure that it doesn't veer off into the overly super-intense, constantly dark side of life." ♦

Mercy Point



The last thing television needs is another hospital show, but the creative team behind *Mercy Point* swears that the series offers a very different take on the medical drama. Instead of the doctors at a leading inner-city hospital struggling against



personal adversity to practice the best medicine they can, the show features a team of 23rd century mednauts at a leading intergalactic space station who struggle against personal adversity to practice the best medicine they can. *Mercy Point*'s physicians have a slightly more challenging job than charming docs George Clooney and Anthony Edwards, however. Their mission is to treat both human and alien patients.

Considering the steady following of hospital ensemble series such as *ER* and *Chicago Hope* and the sizeable cult audience devoted to genre fare, it's surprising that it has taken this long to see television's first sci-fi medical drama, says *Mercy Point* creator and co-executive producer Trev Calloway.

From a medical standpoint, it's fascinating to try to see beyond the amazing advances we make every day in medicine now to consider what we might be capable of doing later, Calloway says. "It's also fascinating to consider what the world and our galaxy will be like 250 years from now. We have gone to great pains to craft a positive yet realistic depiction of life and death in the 23rd century. What we're suggesting is that 250 years

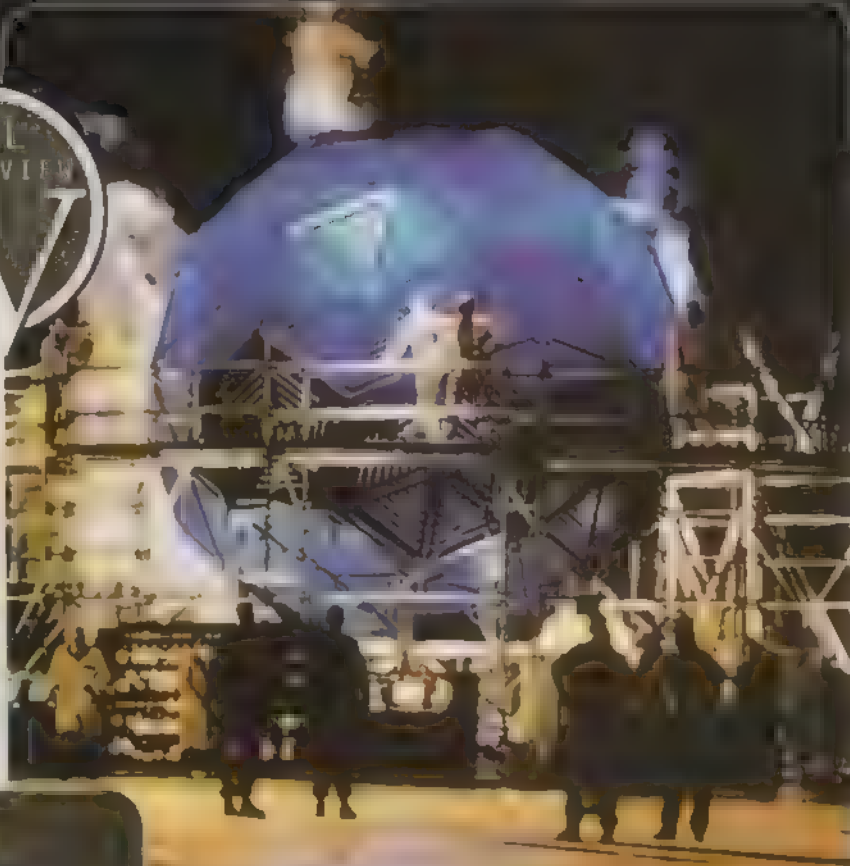


into the future, the human species, following the European model of western expansion, has really pioneered the exploration of space.

Although the concept for the UPN series, which stars Joe Morton, Maria Del Mar, Brian McNamara and Alexandra Wilson, originated as a feature film script called *Nightingale One*, the premise—examining the lives of the staff at a space-station hospital—seemed a

natural for television, Calloway says.

One of the things we're suggesting is that even in the future, with all the technological advances you might expect, people are still going to get sick, die, disagree and fall in love," he explains. "Thematically, we say the show is about the future of the human heart. The bulk of our stories, while draped in a really fantastic setting, really do revolve around the characters and their relationships." ♦



The time-traveling action series is a risky venture indeed—just ask anyone at ABC about last fall's dismal *TimeCop*. Nevertheless, Christopher Crowe, series creator and executive producer of UPN's *Seven Days*, believes he has improved on another network's machine.

Seven Days stars Jonathan LaPaglia as CIA hired hand Frank Parker, who is drafted by the government to travel backward in time to stop disasters before they happen. The time-travel device, however, can only place the agent one week prior to the event.



Seven DAYS

leaving him precious little time to avert certain doom.

"This is an action show," explains Crowe. "It's almost a military show injected with some science-fiction hormones. It gives us the ability to explore current events and the potentials of negative current events. So many things that are happening in our world can go the wrong way in terms of technology. You have people screwing around with genetic things, viruses that break loose and, of course, nukes."

"Of course, we're not always dealing with the cataclysm of the week," he continues.

"There are great moral dilemmas, too. [In one] episode, we have a Flight 800 situation. Our group learns that there is a diplomat on board, so they have to go back and undo it. At the last moment, they learn that the diplomat wasn't actually on the aircraft, [it] was a children's group going to China. Parker learns about those kids and goes ballistic. He wants to go anyway!"

The constant ticking of the clock propels the action forward at a steady pace and adds a necessary element of suspense, Crowe says. But he admits, too, that producing believable scripts in which Parker

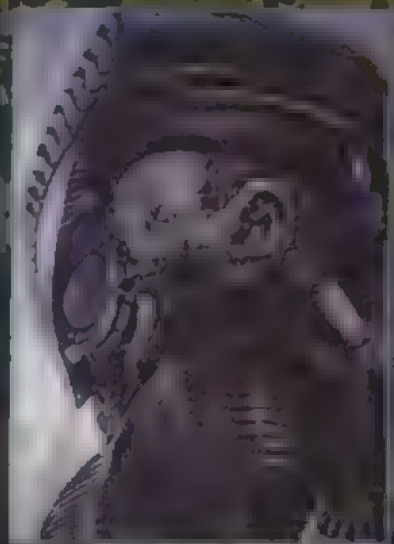
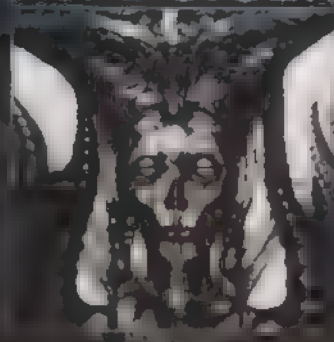
prevents international tragedies in less than a week is not always easy. "We're facing the challenge now, but we've found that there is so much you can do. I don't think the premise is limiting," he says. "High Noon didn't really work until they put a clock in it. [When] they got the idea of really making [the action center around] high noon and putting a time clock in it, the movie began to get its energy. In that sense, I think we have an advantage because of the clock."

LaPaglia as the next Gary Cooper? Who knows what the future will bring. ♦

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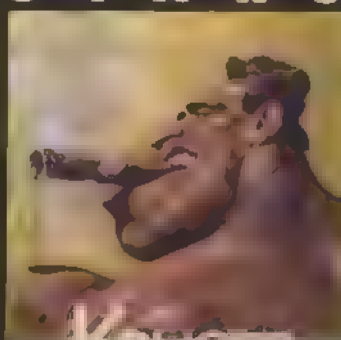
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TV

Highlander: The RAVEN

Here's the pitch. Macho ex-cop reluctantly teams with beautiful woman to aid people in need. Here's the gimmick: The woman belongs to a race of centuries-old Scottish warriors and undergoes a traumatic experience after which she seeks atonement for her morally ambiguous past. Sure, it's a little on the high-concept side, but the creative team behind *Highlander: The Raven* swear that the idea will not only capture the imaginations of hardcore fans of the *Highlander* franchise but also reach a mainstream audience hungry for something out of the ordinary.

"The hook," explains creative consultant David Abramowitz, "is that the show is about a mortal and an Immortal in a blending of *Highlander* meets *Moonlighting* meets *Ghost*."

Not that Whoopi Goldberg is slated for guest appearances as an eccentric psychic anytime soon. Instead, former Miss America Elizabeth Gracen will add the

supernatural element to the mix with her Immortal Amanda, the character first introduced as the on-again, off-again love interest of Adrian Paul's Duncan MacLeod on *Highlander: The Series*. Actor Paul Johansson, who has appeared on a number of television outings such as *Heatwave* and *Lonesome Dove*, co-stars as her partner Nick.

Highlander: The Raven will still feature the extensive flashback sequences and moody atmosphere that made the franchise so popular, but the chemistry between Gracen and Johansson will bring a new dimension—levity—to the *Highlander* realm, says executive producer Marla Ginsburg. This show is somewhere between the dark, brooding world of Duncan MacLeod and a movie like *Ghost*, she offers. "This show's more fun. I don't see a lot of fun on TV, so I think it's also different in that way."

Given that the series that spawned *The Raven* has six successful seasons and well

over 100 episodes to its credit, comparisons between the two shows are inevitable. Ginsburg, however, is confident that the show will have no trouble making a name for itself. "The truth of the matter is that I don't sit around worrying about a lot of comparative reviewing: 'Will *Raven* hold up to *Highlander*? Does *Highlander* hold up to something else?'" she says. "This is a very good show and has all the same creative people behind it, but—[jumping] to a whole other genre—I don't think when David Kelley did *Ally McBeal* he sat around and said, 'Gee, does this compare to my other work?'"

"It's a very different show, but I think the hardcore *Highlander* fans will love it, while at the same time there is a real mainstream potential for the this show that may not have been there for *Highlander*," she continues. "The bottom line is that this show has to stand on its own...and it will."

—Reported by Scott Thomas ♦

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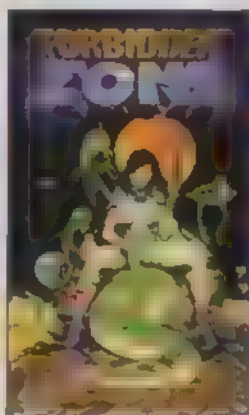
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If you do the math, it works out that Kurt
 performance in the upcoming sci-fi epic *Soldier*.

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* strain on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strain 101. The concentration of the *Agrobacterium* strain 101 was varied from 10 to 1000 cells per μ l. The transformation efficiency was determined by the number of transformants per μ l of the *Agrobacterium* strain 101. The data were expressed as the mean $\pm$ SD of three independent experiments. The transformation efficiency was significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) at 1000 cells per μ l than at 10 cells per μ l.

name—like Clint (Eastwood),

1. *What is the main purpose of the study?*
 2. *What are the research objectives?*
 3. *What is the research methodology?*
 4. *What are the findings of the study?*
 5. *What are the conclusions of the study?*
 6. *What are the limitations of the study?*
 7. *What are the implications of the study?*
 8. *What are the future research directions?*
 9. *What are the contributions of the study?*
 10. *What are the key words of the study?*

Darwin's principle of survival of the fittest, born during a



by Beth Laski

ARMY 5 SURPLUS



S

Classic war movie
Kurt Russell takes
minimalist turn in the
action-heavy **Soldier**



The best among this new breed of warriors—stronger in every sense of the word—is Caine 607 (Jason Scott Lee, star of *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*) who, in a government test to demonstrate his superiority, is pitted against another super-soldier, Todd. The aging soldier, considered a deemed useless, is left for dead and dumped on a trash-filled planet that Todd is gradually nursed back to health by the settlers, specifically Sandra (Connie Nielsen) and her husband Mace (*Event Horizon*'s Sean Pertwee), and begins to learn about his own humanity and everyday life beyond the battlefield. His past comes back to haunt him when dastardly Col. Mekum (Jason Isaacs of *Armageddon*) leads Caine and other next-generation mercenaries in a bid to take over the planet, forcing Todd to defend his people from the perfect new breed.

This is a classic Western set in space, says Jerry Weintraub, the film's producer, who is no stranger to big-budget genre works having just supervised *The Avengers* to the big screen. "It's not your

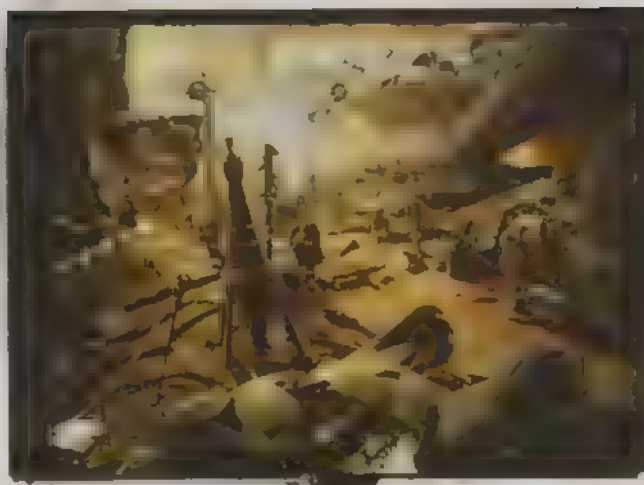
usual fare. The only thing I can compare it to is *The Road Warrior* or *Mad Max*. It's that kind of genre.

Soldier is a sibling of sorts to the sci-fi classic *Blade Runner*, which was written in part by Peoples (who also penned acclaimed screenplays for *Unforgiven* and *Twelve Monkeys*).

While it's not exactly a prequel or a sequel, *Blade Runner* Anderson describes it as a sequel.

These two movies really do exist in the same universe for me," says Anderson, who adds that the two films share "very similarities in locations and references," including a battle fought by Russell that is inspired by *Blade Runner*.

In our minds, this is kind of an extension of *Blade Runner*, or a brother or a sister to that film," says David L. Snyder, the film's production designer, who also



carried an Academy Award nomination for his art design on the classic 1982 film.

That film is sort of inspirational to us.

While *Blade Runner* deconstructed the conventions of science fiction with the characters and world of *Four Star* detective thriller *Soldier* is more of a book-and-guts action picture. But they will share a dark vision of the future and an emphasis on existential questions like "What does it mean to be human?" In *Blade Runner*, it was the fugitive "repllicants"—in particular Rutger Hauer's Roy Batty—who were asking the big questions about life and death. In *Soldier*, it will be dehumanized killers like Russell's Todd.

If you were to talk about child abuse, I guess these people would be the ultimately abused," Russell says. "These guys start out at the age of six months playing with blocks and what not, and by the age of 2 years, they're watching wolverines fight dogs. At age 4 they're starting to physicalize their own violent behavior upon themselves, and then it becomes a controlled world of *Lord of the Flies*.

As the weak are weeded out and the soldiers reach age 15 or so they're robotized to the point where they do exactly what they're told get up every day, get dressed, train, fight and kill. From age 18 on, they go to battle in a deadly world where the weaponry includes a gun that shoots 60 rounds a second.

The most difficult thing in making the decision of whether or not to do the movie was realizing that, at my age, it was going to take me better than a year to get in the physical condition to be able to be credible and believable as the character," says Russell, who is 47 years old. "I think you should always try to look like the characters and try to appear physically right for the part. If you sign on then you've got to earn your money.

But neither law nor a food pump-up lecture stop technology

SOLDIER

Director: Paul Anderson
(*Braveheart*, *Meridian*)

Screenplay: David Webb Peoples
(*Twelve Monkeys*, *Unforgotten*)

Music: Warner Bros.

Release Date: October 20

Summary: Matt Russell is a depressed 22-year-old soldier defending an outpost from the soldiers who murdered his brother.

NOT-SO-SMALL SOLDIER: Jason Scott Lee (below) plays futuristic super-warrior Caine 607; Soldier's production designer says *Blade Runner* inspired the film's sets (above).



progress, which creates a newer, stronger soldier. Just as machines that were once trumpeted as "cutting edge" wind up as scrap, the soldiers of the future face their demise at the hands of the next generation of warriors.

"When the B-1 bomber wears out, Congress gets rid of it and replaces it with a better, more modern airplane," Weintraub says. "In this film, technology creates better, newer soldiers, making the old soldiers no longer useful."

"Although this is a science-fiction film, at times it should really feel as though it is a Western," Anderson says. "We went for recognizable Western landscapes. We've made a Monument Valley, but instead of out of stone, we've made it out of twisted metal. Our settlement has a windmill in it, but it's the wing of a DC-3 instead. I think if you're going to make a science-fiction film, you better have an interesting take on it, otherwise you're never going to get a fresh look."

After Snyder read the script, he outlined what he thought the garbage planet (where two-thirds of the film takes place) would look like, including a list of some of the kinds of junk that might be dumped there. Snyder's research included consulting thousands of research photos taken at junkyards in four states. Initially, the plan was to shoot most of the film on location in an Azusa, Calif., rock quarry, but El Niño weather interfered, and late last year the decision was made to scrap most of that plan. The filmmakers decided it would be too risky to build the expansive and expensive sets outside: The script called for winds of up to 500 miles per hour and the dumping of 10,000 gallons of water on the set.

Instead, the multi-layered, multi-storied planet was built on an enormous Warner Bros. soundstage previously used as Gotham City in *Batman Returns* and as the cryogenic prison in *Demolition Man*, which Snyder also designed.

"Over time, all of the landscape has been wiped off, and the planet becomes a dust ball," says Anderson. "So every time you see a majestic mountain range, from the distance it looks like mountains, but when you get close to it, it's a huge accumulation of garbage—wrecked cars, broken bottles and discarded tires."

On Warner Bros.' Stage 16, the massive set consumed about 2.5 million cubic feet,

all of it piled 40-feet-high with junk—the cockpit of a DC-3, a huge satellite dish, a partially destroyed Las Vegas billboard, the car of a Japanese bullet train, an F-117 Stealth bomber and one of the flying cop cars from *Blade Runner*.

The planet set also featured smaller scale references to the 20th and 21st centuries, including discarded compact discs that make up a chandelier and banks of fused electrical meters.

"Things aren't even chopped up when they're dumped here," Snyder notes. "They're just dumped by these huge robot garbage ships."

The way Peoples' decade-old story goes no one was supposed to live on the garbage planet, but a group of colonists travelling in the early 21st century were stranded there when their spaceship crashed. Three-quarters of the passengers died in the initial impact, and the survivors found ways to live off the land.

"They were people escaping a world of economic turmoil, political violence. They

FIGHT THE FUTURE: Soldier's take on 21st century warfare (above and left); Todd and Sandra (Matt Russell and Connie Nielsen) get in touch with their softer sides (below).

were moving away from something that wasn't working," says actress Connie Nielsen (*The Devil's Advocate*), who plays one of the planet's residents. "They crash and in the face of necessity they have to pull it together and make the best of it."

The settlers build homes and a democratic community where they teach and practice non-violence. They all pitch in to ensure group survival, much like life on a kibbutz.

They're basically the Swiss Family Robinson, but instead of tree branches and palm fronds, the settlers are surrounded by steel and plastic and any other non-combustible material you can think of. Snyder explains.

Snyder even tried to base some of his designs on real cultures. He studied pre-Columbian settlements around the world including ancient communities in New Mexico caverns and Native American living

spaces in Arizona and New Mexico

"The research was important because if these people are going to be here for 10 years and they don't have much to do except this, I would think they would spend a lot of time on the architecture and the culture and the comfort of the village," Snyder says

The set was constructed over roughly 65 days (or approximately 7,000 working hours) by two crews, each numbering between 125 to 175 workers per day. The workers used 24 miles of steel-pipe scaffolding, 12.5 tons of pencil-rod steel and 8.2 tons of angle iron in making the creation. The various levels were designed to incorporate living space for the settlers, including a garden, kitchen and children's play area

Despite the ambitious scope of the set, it had to be constructed on an extremely tight schedule once the studio pushed the film into an October release slot

Though no one involved with the production would divulge the film's budget or the costs to build the main set, Snyder revealed that "We had a lot of money to spend" on designing and building the sets. "The majority of the set costs went to build the rocks"

Hollywood scuttlebutt puts the film's budget in the \$60 million to \$70 million range, of which \$15 million went to Russell for his starring role. But Weintraub insists that, despite the size of Russell's paycheck, he never wanted *Soldier* to be just another Hollywood star vehicle

"I didn't want this picture to become 'so-and-so's movie,'" says Weintraub, explaining his choice of Russell for the title role. The producer adds that he did consider for the part the "usual list of \$20 million and \$15 million actors" before signing Russell. "The great thing about Kurt Russell is that he's a big star and a wonderful actor, but when you make a project with him it doesn't necessarily become a Kurt Russell movie. It's a movie called *Soldier*. Kurt Russell happens to be starring in it."

After Russell was initially approached for the role, the actor agreed, but said he needed to take a year off to get in shape for the part. During that year, Weintraub produced *The Avengers* and Anderson went on to direct *Event Horizon*, which turned out to be a box-office bust

It all fit in," Weintraub says. "Kurt went off and played with the kids and got in shape and we came together to make the film"

Russell, a one-time professional baseball player, worked out with a trainer three



SUPERBUNT in the 21st century, war is still hell (above), Russell, the \$15 million dollar man, trained for a year for his role as Todd (right).

hours a day, six days a week for more than a year to pump up for the part

"It's not a muscle role as much as it is being believable looking as the character," says Russell. "These guys just don't preen. They don't puff up. They don't buff up. They're hard and they're used up. This was like getting to where you can look like you're broken down. That was the hardest thing because I knew I had a year in front of me that was not going to be fun. It hasn't been a pleasant year in that regard."

"I guess that's somewhat of a compliment to me because I didn't hear the moaning and groaning," says Greg Isaacs, who runs the Warner Bros. Fitness Center and trained Russell for 14 months. "I think he really rose to the occasion, and as much as he didn't like it, the alternative was unacceptable."

Russell's regimen consisted of daily workouts of about an hour of cardiovascular conditioning, an hour to 75 minutes of strength training and a barrage of other activities, which included mountain biking,

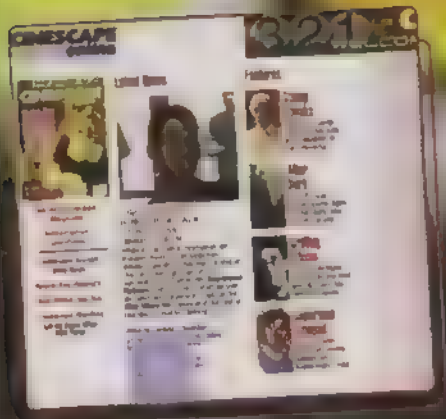
boxing, sprinting and various phases of strength training

Depending on Kurt's call time and schedule, he does cardiovascular conditioning first thing in the morning, and then during lunch we'll go through our training regimen," says Isaacs. "Some days won't be as rigorous as others. For example, today he's climbing up a chain. We're backing off a little bit on that to conserve his energy and not burn him out and deplete him"

Russell also does some of his own stunts including flying. "We'll be flying Kurt in this [movie] several times," explains stunt coordinator Dick Ziker. "One time, we're going to blow him off the top of one of the futuristic troop transports. We'll jerk him about 120 feet through the air. He's so athletic. I wouldn't do it with another actor"

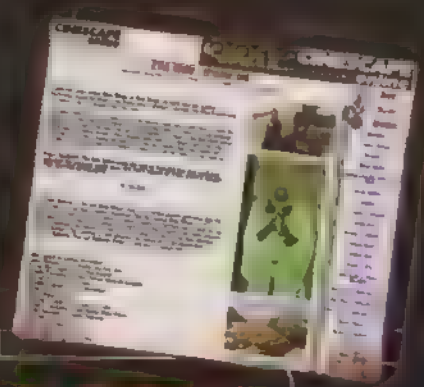
Will all Russell's pain lead to box-office gain? That depends on how many moviegoers enlist for action with *Soldier* when it opens in theaters nationwide October 23 ♦

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Gone Fishin'



The sea-faring serial-killer from *I Know What You Did Last Summer* is back

by gina mcintyre

These days, it's difficult to come up with an original concept for a horror movie sequel, particularly one of the big-budget variety. The conventional narrative—psychotic killer mysteriously survives bludgeoning, burial or dismemberment, returns to terrorize a new batch of headstrong teens, and after dispatching most of them, meets his own demise—is so firmly entrenched in the minds of audiences that it elicits plenty of groans and some bored sighs, but relatively few gasps and almost never a scream.

But the team behind *I Still Know*, the upcoming sequel to *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, is seeking to change all that with a story that relies on character development and carefully crafted suspense, not graphic violence, for scares.

"There are no effects," explains director Danny Cannon (*Judge Dredd*). "Everybody can tell an effect. What's scary to me is what's happening for real or what you believe to be happening. There's a scene at the end of this film where three members of the crew jumped out of their chairs watching us shoot it. This film is about [what] is really, really, really going on."

"I think that there was a terrible thing that happened in the first film with the death of this guy, and the guilt of that leant itself to an enormous amount of drama," he continues. "Now there are life or death situations constantly throughout the movie because it's payback time."

Still looking for revenge, the hook-wielding fisherman of the first film (Muse Watson) decides to interrupt the weekend getaway



planned by Julie James (Jennifer Love Hewitt) and her friends (played by Freddie Prinze Jr., Matthew Settle and R&B sensation Brandi). Much of *I Still Know* was shot on location in a remote section of Mexico's Gold Coast, which doubled as the island resort where the action takes place. The setting, with its real-life perils of scorpion stings and malaria, greatly added to the film's foreboding atmosphere.

"On the surface, it's a beautiful place to be, but you never quite understand the space. It's mazelike. It takes on a life of its own. There's a very shady past to this place," Cannon says.

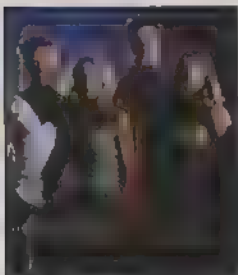
No matter how creepy the

locale is, though, it takes a dynamic villain to strike fear into the hearts of audiences. Watson, for one, understands just how critical his performance as the maniacal serial-killer is to the final fright factor, and has been honing his menacing tactics.

"As an actor, I've tried every way to add depth to the character," he says. "I've worked on body movement as much as I can to make sure that the appearance is there. The camera guys are working on the [shots] when I appear, hiding [my] face and what not. We are all working very hard to make sure that the big spooks are there." —Reported by Beth Laski ♦

Scary Business

I Know What You Did Last Summer made \$15 million its first weekend. Now *I Still Know* hopes to emulate another horror franchise: *Scream 2* earned \$33 million its first three days of release, about \$27 million more than *Scream* made during the same period.



AUSTIN POWERS 2

Plot: Unknown, although some claim that the story takes Austin into the future to confront Dr. Evil once again.

Players: Mike Myers, Elizabeth Hurley

Director: Jay Roach

Status: In development

Release Date: Fall 1999

Latest Rumors: Little is known, except for the time-travel storyline and the fact that New Line has already started pumping the movie online (www.austinpowers.com).

Inside Buzz: Austin Powers was a surprise hit that gained momentum after its debut. The buzz at a recent licensing expo in New York predicted big box-office returns.

BRIDE OF CHUCKY

Plot: The fourth installment of the Chucky franchise teams Chucky with a Tiffany doll as the duo hijack an eloping couple and force them on a road trip—leaving a body count in their wake.

Players: Jennifer Tilly, Brad Dourif, John Ritter, Katherine Heigl, Nick Stabile, Alexis Arquette

Director: Roman Polanski

Status: In production

Release Date: 1998

Latest Rumors: The movie opens with Jennifer Tilly being killed by the demonic doll after stitching Chucky back together. **Inside Buzz:** Universal hopes to cash in on the current craze of teen slashers with their own horror franchise. Unfortunately, Chucky isn't *Scream* and Katherine Heigl is no Neve Campbell.

CARRIE 2

Plot: Amy Irving returns as school counselor Sue Snell, confronting another ostracized student capable of projecting her wrath upon the classmates who torment her.

Players: Amy Irving, Emily Bergl, Zachery Ty Bryan, Jason London, Dylan Bruno, Justin Ulrich, Rachel Blanchard, Elijah Craig

Director: Kim Koba

Status: In production

Release Date: 1999

Latest Rumors: Michael Winner has left the director's chair citing "creative differences." Rachel Blanchard is doing a great turn as one of the nasty cheerleaders who torment Emily Bergl.

Inside Buzz: Like the Chucky sequel, most believe that MGM/UA is attempting to cash in on the *Scream*-craze by dreaming up their own thriller and hanging the *Carrie* name on it. Then again, a PO'd teen with telekinetic powers can be awfully fun to watch.

DEEP BLUE SEA

Plot: Think *Jaws* on steroids: An oceanography team attempts to flee an off-shore lab housing a new species of genetically-enhanced super-intelligent killer sharks.

Players: Thomas Jane

Director: Renny Harlin

Status: Pre-production

Release Date: 1999

Latest Rumors: Renny Harlin is to start filming with a budget that will eclipse \$100 million. Warner Bros. is rushing to get this super-shark flick into theaters before Disney's similarly-themed *Megalodon*. **Inside Buzz:** *Jaws* showed how terrifying a shark attack can be, and *Deep Blue Sea* hopes to multiply that success with volume and just a touch of sci-fi. Early buzz is very positive, despite the apprehension over Harlin's big budget and his recent string of flops.



HEAVENLY CREATURE: Salma Hayek

DILIGENTIA

Plot: During a visit from the angel Metatron, a young woman named Bethany learns that she must prevent humanity from being destroyed by two renegade angels who hope to use a loophole to get back into heaven.

Players: Linda Fiorentino, Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Salma Hayek, Chris Rock, Alan Rickman, Alanis Morissette

Director: Kevin Smith

Status: Post-production

Release Date: 1999

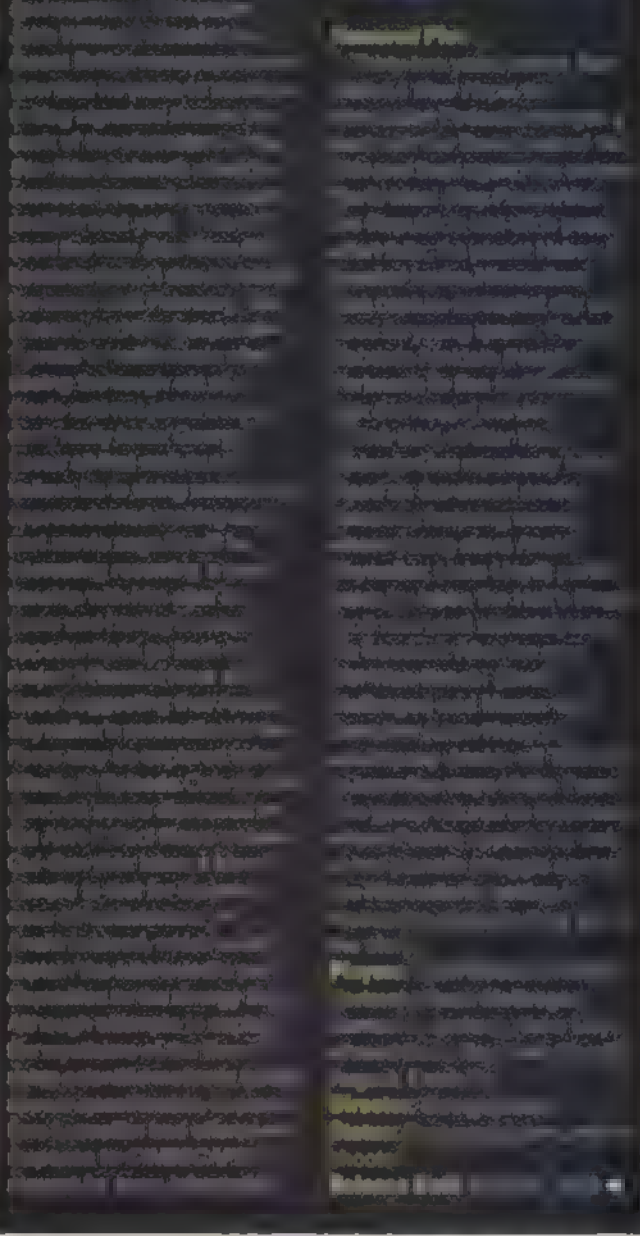
Latest Rumors: Kevin Smith promises to continue his tradition of including *Star Wars* quotes in his movies. Alanis Morissette is said to play God in two important scenes. **Inside Buzz:** Despite reports that Disney execs are getting nervous

Star Wars Episode One: Countdown To May 25, 1999 OF MUSIC AND MIDICLORIANS

News and Rumors



BACK TO THE DESERT: Young Anakin (Jake Lloyd) sits down for a meal in the Skywalker home.





FRANCHISE FOLLY

With the recent onslaught of new sequels in development from major studio franchises that range from *Alien* and *Die Hard* to *Austin Powers*, *Beavis and Butt-head* and *Jurassic Park*, **CINESCAPE** offers this advice to producers hoping to deliver the best movie their money can buy.

What They're Giving Us

Significance: Another brilliant example of how to make a franchise movie.

Just how far: The franchise has been expanded to include a new movie.

Not to be confused with: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

What to watch for: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

Time to move on: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

That's the way it is: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

Don't miss: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

What We Really Want

Significance: Another brilliant example of how to make a franchise movie.

Just how far: The franchise has been expanded to include a new movie.

Not to be confused with: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

What to watch for: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

Time to move on: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

That's the way it is: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

Don't miss: A franchise movie that is not a franchise movie.

about the tone of *Dogma*, most believe it'll be Smith's finest film to date. The subject matter, combined with Affleck and Damon's star power, guarantee strong interest.

END OF DAYS

Plot: Unfolding on the eve of the next millennium, *End of Days* pits Arnold as a New York cop against none other than the Prince of Darkness himself as Lucifer returns to Earth to find a bride.

Players: Arnold Schwarzenegger

Director: Marcus Nispel

Status: Pre-production

Release Date: Summer 1999

Latest Rumors: Trade magazine *Variety* describes *EOD* as "Silence of the Lambs meets *Alien*."

Inside Buzz: Satan tries to take a bite out of the Big Apple again, but ex-cop Schwarzenegger should help lift the spirits of Universal. A definite change of pace for Arnold, who finally gets to team with director Nispel after the pair prepped for the now defunct *S.W.A.T.*

eXistenZ

Plot: David Cronenberg again explores the essence of reality in a story about a group of operatives trained within virtual-reality worlds who must fight for their lives when the computer "games" take on a life all their own.

Players: Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jude Law, Willem Dafoe, Ian Holm, Don McKeller, Sarah Polley

Director: David Cronenberg

Status: In production

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: The budget of *eXistenZ* is locked in at \$31 million. **Inside Buzz:** We've seen this theme before—but Cronenberg is certain to let it all hang out in what should be his greatest plea for commercial acceptance since *The Fly*.

EYES WIDE SHUT

Plot: Garnering more attention for its never-ending shooting schedule than for its twisted sexual storyline, *Eyes Wide Shut* focuses on two married psychologists (Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman) and the erotic encounters they share with a strange patient. Based on the 1926 Arthur Schnitzler novella *Traumnovelle* ("Dream Novel") and updated to present day by *EWS* scribe Frederic Raphael.

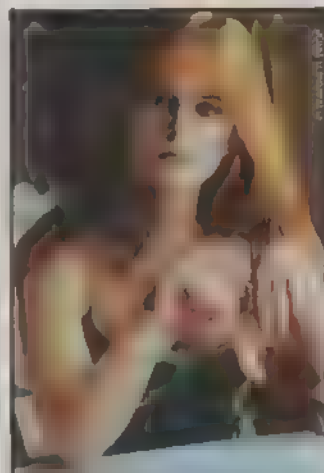
Players: Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Marie Richardson, Sydney Pollack, Thomas Gibson

Director: Stanley Kubrick

Status: In production

Release Date: February 1999

Latest Rumors: New details about the storyline were revealed in *The Guardian* newspaper, including a Christmas setting and a climactic masked-ball orgy sequence. Some sample scenes have required as many as 30 to 40 takes. Warner execs are nervous that the sexually charged film may earn the dreaded NC-17.



GETTING SHUT EYE: Nicole Kidman

rating, and few relish the prospect of asking Kubrick to re-cut the movie. **Inside Buzz:** Warner Bros. executives have privately labeled *EWS* a "nightmare," leading many to believe that whenever Kubrick delivers a final print it will hardly resemble the original pitch. Interest remains high on *EWS* but for all the wrong reasons.

THE FLINTSTONES IN UTAH ROCK VEGAS

Plot: A prequel to Universal's first *Flintstones* movie follows Fred and Wilma to Rock Vegas with Barney and Betty on a vacation from their tiny apartment and new puppy Dino.

Players: Drew Carey, Parker Posey (both unconfirmed)

Director: Brian Levant

Status: Pre-production

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: *Flintstones* are in negotiations with Carey for the lead in *Rock Vegas*. Expect Las Vegas to get the prehistoric treatment with glittering gems galore. **Inside Buzz:** Universal wants to continue the franchise despite John Goodman's vow not to return to the role. Expect a smaller budget but good audience interest.

FAHRENHEIT 451

Plot: The fireman of the future is charged with extinguishing the free thought found in books, until one of the burners begins to question

ALVIN KUBRICK: © KUBRICK; EYES WIDE SHUT: © UNIVERSAL; PARKER POSEY: © UNIVERSAL; BATMAN & WARNER BROS.: © BATMAN & WARNER BROS.; ALVIN KUBRICK: © KUBRICK



Press Start

Hollywood finds New Film Ideas in Computer Games

By Garth Franklin

Computer games are hot in Hollywood, with the film rights to popular titles being snatched up by eager studios faster than a rapid-fire cannon. A slew of video-game-inspired movies are now in development, despite the uneven performance of just about every game-based movie ever produced.

STAR WARS

Despite having a limited \$27-million budget, Chris Roberts has apparently been doing a great job on the set. A number of concerns have popped up (including a release date move from November to February, which would put it very much in the shadow of the *Star Wars* prequel) and early pics have received only moderate reactions. The Kilrathi look like giant hairless hamsters. The storyboards look original and exciting and the overall style has a far grittier and more primitive feel than the *Star Wars* films.

QUANTUM RUMOR

While everyone from Elizabeth Hurley to Anna Nicole Smith is being considered to play Lara Croft, the film's producers have been working closely with

Eidos to ensure that the script works. Thankfully, they don't want this to go the way of recent game-to-film translations and are demanding a solid story to back up Paramount's 1999 event pic.

MISSION

Columbia/Tri-Star is very keen about this project and is pushing it as a big summer film for next year. Little about the movie has leaked out, however, beyond the fact that casting is expected to be announced later this year and screenwriters Ron Mita and Jim McClain are being given a lot of flexibility on the \$120 million film.

RESIDENT EVIL

After months of negotiations, horror guru George Romero (*Dawn of the Dead*) has finally committed to both writing and directing the film adaptation of *Resident Evil*. Spawn scribe Alan B. McElroy was originally linked as the screenwriter on the project, but his fate appears to be up in the air. Now that Romero is on board, while many *RE* fans have lobbied for Bruce Campbell in the lead, casting has yet to begin. ♦

Hugo Weaving, Joe Pantoliano
Directors: Larry and Andy Wachowski

Status: In production

Release Date: Early 1999

Latest Rumors: The production will utilize CGI similar to *Titanic*'s faux people to superimpose Keanu Reeves' image onto stunt people.

Inside Buzz: Rumors of a poor storyline continue to plague the production, but the FX sequences (both in the CGI world of the future computer as well as an incredible helicopter stunt) are said to be eye-popping. Producer Joel Silver, meanwhile, tells *Variety* that the movie will provide "a new way of looking at action-drama."

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 2

Pitch: At present, the storyline of the sequel (being written by *Trek* scribes Brannon Braga and Ron Moore) is unknown, although it appears likely to involve Ethan Hunt and Luther Stickell.

Players: Tom Cruise, Ving Rhames

Director: John Woo (unconfirmed)

Status: In development

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: John Woo is reportedly in negotiations with Tom Cruise to direct the next *Mission Impossible*, which is rumored to start filming this fall.

Inside Buzz: The first film did remarkably well considering the lame plot. Woo would bring more linear action to the franchise.

MOD SQUAD

Pitch: The film adventures of a group of three young undercover officers searching for a drug syndicate in the L.A. club scene. Based on the '70s television series of the same name.

Players: Claire Danes, Toby Maguire, Omar Epps, Giovanni Ribisi, Josh Brolin, Dennis Farina

Director: Scott Silver

Status: In production

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: Michael Leamer has joined the production as a corrupt music executive who becomes the target of the investigative trio. Original *Mod Squad* cast members may make cameo appearances in the new film.

Inside Buzz: Hollywood has gone retro in recent years, and *Mod Squad* appears to be the latest attempt to cash in on a cult TV program. Despite a recent lawsuit

regarding the ownership of the feature rights, the production continues to proceed nicely.

PITCH BLACK

Pitch: A futuristic adventure about a convicted killer being transported to an intergalactic penal colony. He must earn his shipmates' trust when the vessel they're traveling in crashes on an inhospitable desert planet, which comes alive with dangerous lifeforms during an eclipse.

Players: Vin Diesel, Radha Mitchell, Cole Hauser

Director: David Twohy

Status: Pre-production

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: Some associated with the production are calling *Pitch Black* "Scream set in space," while the storyline seems closer to *The Fugitive* meets *Enemy Mine*.

Inside Buzz: Twohy has a knack for interesting, if unsuccessful, sci-fi writing (*The Arrival* and *Waterworld*), and the premise of *Pitch Black* is intriguing to say the least.

PLANET OF THE APES

Pitch: After an alien ship turns up with a virus that kills the world's children en masse, a group of astronauts investigate the spacecraft in hopes of creating a vaccine for the plague, which they discover was sent by evolved apes to rid the planet of humans.

Players: TBD (possibly Arnold Schwarzenegger)

Status: TBD

Status: In development

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: Cameron has reportedly confirmed that "Planet of the Apes" is definitely somewhere in my future. "Armageddon" director Michael Bay tells *EW* that he has met with Cameron regarding the possibility of directing *POTA*.

Inside Buzz: Look for a remake of *Planet of the Apes* to finally gain momentum with Cameron overseeing the producer duties for Fox.

PSYCHO

Pitch: Why remake a classic piece of America cinema? Who knows? But Gus Van Sant has obtained the blessing of Imagine Entertainment to shoot a color version of Hitchcock's masterwork and use the dialogue from the original.

Players: Anne Heche, Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn

Director: Gus Van Sant

Status: Pre-production

Release Date: TBD

Latest Rumors: Vince Vaughn

WHO IS LARA CROFT?

TOMB RAIDER THE MOVIE

CROFT SUPER SHOW: Paramount's teaser ad for *Tomb Raider*

has landed the role of Norman Bates in the upcoming remake **Inside Buzzi**. Why? Well, it need an updated *Psycho* and besides, we already know how it ends. (Of course, we said the same thing before *Itame* was released.)

STAR TREK: INSURRECTION

Plot: Picard and Co. must disregard Star Fleet orders in an effort to protect the alien Baku race, which inhabits a planet that restores youth. The Enterprise crew goes toe-to-toe with a wayward Federation admiral who attempts to find another race known as the Son'a in their quest to take the magical planet by force.

Players: Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, Jonathan Frakes, Michael Dorn, Anthony Zerbe, Murray Abraham, Donna Murphy.

Director: Jonathan Frakes.

Status: In production.

Release Date: December 1998.

Latest Rumors: Despite an official report that "Insurrection" would be the subtitle to the ninth *Trek* film, rumors indicate that it may change yet again. A script circulating on the Internet has left *Trek* fans nervous.

Inside Buzzi: Early buzz has the curse of the odd-numbered *Trek* films continuing with what some are calling a juvenile storyline. Rumor also hint that creative friction is building between Frakes and executive producer Rick Berman.

SUPERMAN REBORN

Plot: Themes from four previous scripts are said to be incorporated



SUPERCEDED: Kevin Spacey

into the most recent draft, including a plot that follows the *Death of Superman* storyline.

Players: Nicolas Cage, Kevin Spacey (unsigned), Chris Rock (unsigned).

Director: Tim Burton.

Status: On hold.

Release Date: TBD.

Latest Rumors: The *Superman* Reborn production crew has been officially disbanded, with all the principles moving on to other film projects.

Inside Buzzi: Despite outward appearances that Burton's *Superman* is now dead, talk continues that the movie may attempt to resume production in 1999—possibly without Nicolas Cage.

SPIDER-MAN

Plot: Continuing lawsuits plague the movie that everyone wants to see James Cameron make next. A Marvel trustee has sued half of Hollywood to gather back all the rights to the property, so that an auction can take place and a studio partner located.

Players: TBD.

Director: TBD.

Status: In limbo.

Release Date: TBD.

Latest Rumors: Cameron has said that he would consider casting Leonardo DiCaprio in the title role should he be given the opportunity to direct the superhero movie.

Inside Buzzi: It's no mystery why Marvel wants to consolidate the rights to *Spider-Man*. With Cameron's public interest in the project, it's a guaranteed goldmine for the studio that acquires the franchise.

SUPERNOVA

Plot: A sci-fi thriller about a rescue ship that comes to the aid of a space freighter caught in the grav-

itational field of an impending supernova star. The rescue ship and its crew are jeopardized by the deranged occupant of the freighter.

Players: James Spader, Angel Bassett, Robert Forster, Lou Diamond Phillips, Robin Tunney.

Director: Walter Hill.

Status: In production.

Release Date: TBD.

Latest Rumors: For books has signed Steven McDonald to write the *Supernova* novelization.

Inside Buzzi: The story has been described as *Dead Calm* in space, a reference to the Sam Neill-Nicole Kidman movie about a couple terrorized by a killer while stranded on the high seas.

TOTAL RECALL 2

Plot: The movie centers on Arnold Schwarzenegger's character from the original. The big question is whether it will be the intergalactic spy or futuristic everyman caught up in a fantasy adventure.

Players: Arnold Schwarzenegger (unsigned).

Director: Jonathan Frakes.

Status: In development.

Release Date: TBD.

Latest Rumors: In spite of Miramax's pledge to keep the budget on *TR2* tight, rumor has it that the studio may foot the bill for a nine-figure sequel.

Inside Buzzi: After he wraps on *End of Days*, it now looks like Schwarzenegger will choose between a sequel to *Total Recall* or *True Lies*.

True Lies 2

Plot: The continuing adventures of super-agent Harry Tasker and the Omega Group.

Players: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Arnold, Jamie Lee Curtis.

Director: TBD.

Status: In development.

Release Date: TBD.

Latest Rumors: James Cameron recently told the press in Ottawa, Canada that out of all the projects he's looking to direct as follow-up to *Itame*, he's closest to committing

to another *True Lies*.

Inside Buzzi: Since Cameron has also said he wants to avoid direct sequels, it may be some time before we see *TL2*.

THE WILD WILD WEST

Plot: Dr. Arliss, a useless developer, hires a huge walking weapon called the Executioner to kill President Ulysses S. Grant and overthrow the United States.

Players: Will Smith, Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, Salma Hayek, Musetta Vander.

Director: Barry Sonnenfeld.

Status: In production.

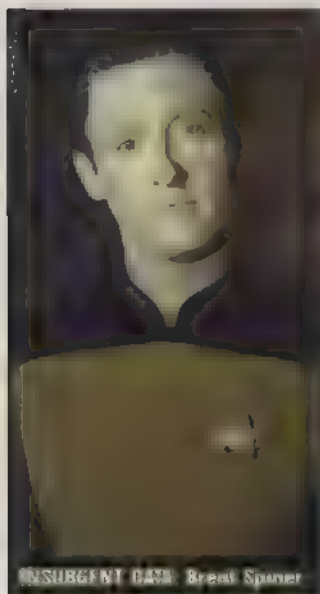
Release Date: Summer 1999.

Latest Rumors: Warner Bros. has selected Will Smith to star. The film is scheduled to debut on the weekend (July 4, 1999) to debut *Wild Wild West*. West and Gordon begin the film as adversaries.

According to a studio press release, **Inside Buzzi:** With Smith occupying the role of a box office terror—both in terms of the release date and the highly profitable sci-fi comedy niche he's carved out for himself—expectations for West are growing considerably.



CAUGHT IN A WEB: Keanu Reeves



INSURGENT DATA: Brent Spiner



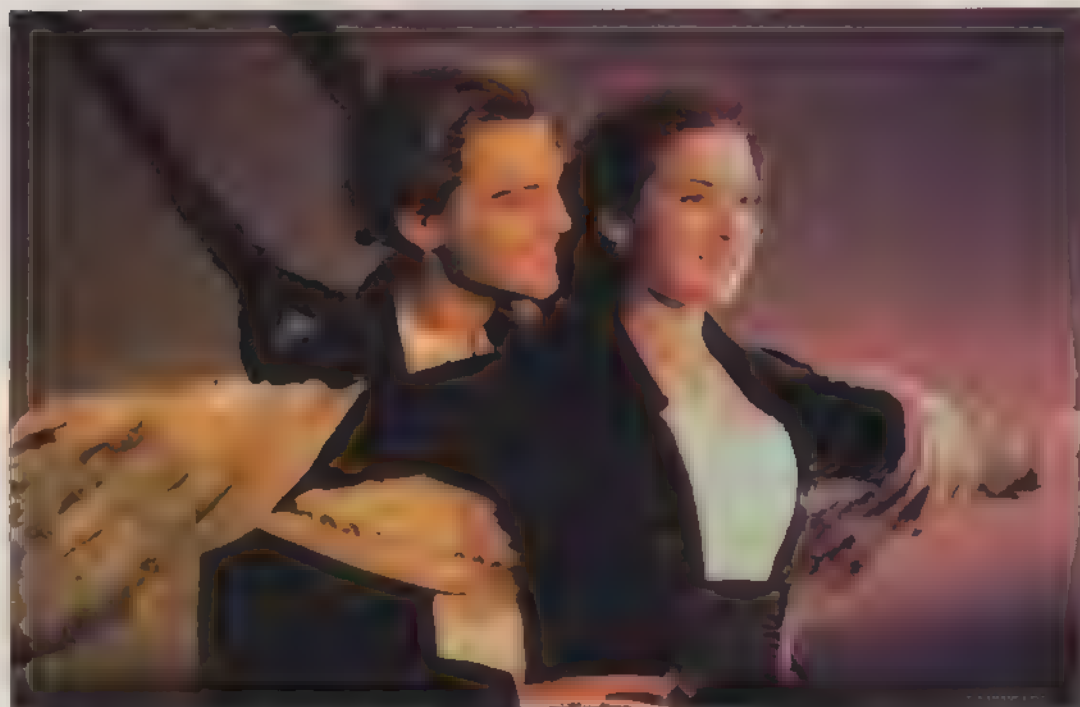
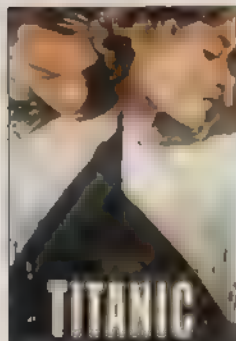
Hope Floats

A sea of hype can't sink the simple pleasures of Titanic

by **steve heckensmith**

Dough Boy

James Cameron spent \$200 million to make *Titanic*, a figure that dwarfs the original value of the real-life luxury liner: It cost about \$7.5 million to construct the ship, and the cargo it carried on its maiden voyage was valued at about \$420,000.



There are small pockets of *Titanic* resistance out there—men and women who have refused to let James Cameron tap their wallets and purses. But it's not like these holdouts have been waiting to see Cameron's smash hit on video (Paramount). How many sane film fans would say to themselves, "An epic packed with lavish sets and awesome FX? Hmmm. Sounds interesting, but why spend the money to see it on the big screen? I'll just pick it up when it hits Blockbuster."

It's more likely that movie buffs who haven't seen *Titanic* yet are conscientious objectors. "It's immoral to spend that much money making a movie" might be their rationale. Or "I'm so sick of the hype." Or, if they're really

snothy, "Anything that makes that much money can't be good."

All such responses reek of back-lash, of course. But you can't really blame anyone who's sick of *Titanic*mania. Cameron's bloated, troubled production was making headlines a year before the film was even released. And once the movie did hit theaters, the resulting media hyperbole washed over the world like a tidal wave, drowning *Titanic*'s fans and foes alike.

Yet it's unfair to judge any film based on the success of its marketing campaign. Beneath the ocean of coverage focusing on the mammoth budget, the computer-generated FX, Cameron's king-of-the-world megalomania, the Academy Awards, Celine Dion's sappy hit single, Leonardo DiCaprio's pri-

vate life and the real-life tragedy of the doomed ship, there lurks an extremely simple, straightforward Hollywood movie. And a pretty entertaining one, at that.

Which isn't to say that the naysayers don't have a point. "It cost too much money" isn't a fair criticism. "It made too much money" isn't, either. But "It's corny"? Well, that can't be disputed. The secret to *Titanic*'s strengths—and flaws—is that the film itself is utterly traditional and conventional in every way. The special effects might have been cutting edge, but the story, characters and dialogue harken back to the classic dramas of the '30s, '40s and '50s. This is great if you have a soft spot for over-the-top melodrama, stock characters and flow-



ery flights of purple-prose dialogue. It's not so great if these things strike you as old-fashioned, goofy or just plain dumb.

A plot refresher for the two or three readers who might actually require one: After free-wheeling vagabond Jack Dawson (DiCaprio) and his buddy Fabrizio (Danny Nucci) win steerage tickets in a card game, they find themselves on the "unsinkable" luxury liner for its maiden voyage to America. On the ship, Jack meets beautiful first-class passenger Rose DeWitt Bukater (Kate Winslet) suffocated by her controlling mother (Frances Fisher) and psychotic fiancé (Billy Zane). Rose is on the verge of suicide. But Jack's carefree *joe de vivre* helps her to embrace the rebellious, liberated spirit within her.

Then the ship sinks and just about everybody dies.

Despite the ostentatiously stunning CG recreations of the Titanic and several '90s framing sequences (in which a now-wizened Rose, played by Gloria Stuart, shares her memories with earring-clad treasure hunter Bill Paxton), the film has a distinctly retro feel. Just as Cameron's *Aliens* captured the flavor of old platoon-in-distress films like *A Walk*

in the Sun, *Titanic* is a throw-back to classic star-crossed romances like *Now, Voyager* and *Dark Victory*. Even some of the performances and dialogue are 1940s-vintage. Nucci's "Now-a-we-a-go-a to America, Jack-a!" Italian accent is a hoot, and schmaltz-intolerant viewers will roll their eyes at lines like, "A woman's heart is a deep ocean of secrets."

But get beyond the corn and *Titanic* has the classic qualities of a strong Hollywood movie—likable characters in an interesting setting faced with tough choices. Given those

strengths, *Titanic* still rises to the top even after video strips away the grandeur and power of the big-screen megavix. **★★★★☆**



Digital Democracy

CINESCAPE asked visitors to its Website (www.mvplorum.com/partners/dlgdem) what they thought of James Cameron's Oscar-winning blockbuster *Titanic*. Though there were a few dissenters, the majority opinion was overwhelming: Cameron is the king of the world.

"*Titanic* was the greatest motion picture of all time. It will be more beloved than *Gone With The Wind*."—David Simonds, *vader_darth@hotmail.com*

"It is a wonderfully entertaining film, not without some..."



"...script inconsistencies and the occasional silly dialogue, but it's still a remarkable achievement in storytelling."—Gustav Swenson, *Columbia, Mo.*

"*Titanic* was a great movie. Exciting, romantic, even funny. But was it the best movie of last year? Not quite. The problem? Billy Zane. His character was not written very well. It

boon me and DiCaprio had been decent guys, it would have been more of a struggle for Winslet, not the simplistic story it is now."—Todd Bonny, *Spring, Tex.*



"Did it deserve all those Oscars? Some of them. Was it really the best picture of the year? Not a chance! I think what soured me most was that stupid Celine Dion song. I wanted to shoot my stereo every time it came on."—Mike Travaglini, *St. Louis*

"It wasn't the piece-of-crap movie I thought it would be, but it sure wasn't the best picture of the year! The script was horrible. I could have written better dialogue in the three hours it took to watch it."—cosmo128@hotmail.com

"*Titanic* may not be perfect in every sense, but it still found its place in our hearts. The story will not be forgotten, and the film has earned its place in history."—J.J. Mortimer, *Thousand Oaks, Calif.*





ALL ABOUT Eve

The blonde alien bombshell who captivated audiences with her killer libido in 1995's *Species* may rest in pieces, but the scratch marks from Sil's romp on Earth remain in *Species 2* (MGM/UA). One of Sil's frozen embryos has been taken and cultivated by the military. The leggy result is named Eve (played by the original Sil Natasha Henstridge, in a considerably scaled back role

This time around, Eve's a slightly kinder and gentler version of her mommy recruited to help stop E.T.-infested astronaut Patrick Ross (Justin Lazard). While in space, Ross unwittingly became host to the randy race of alien ooze that spawned Sil. Scientists soon discover that Ross can be traced through spikes in Eve's estrogen levels and a psychic link the alien

parasite inside him shares with her. But when the astronaut shows up at Eve's doorstep, her raging hormones can't be contained and the future of humankind

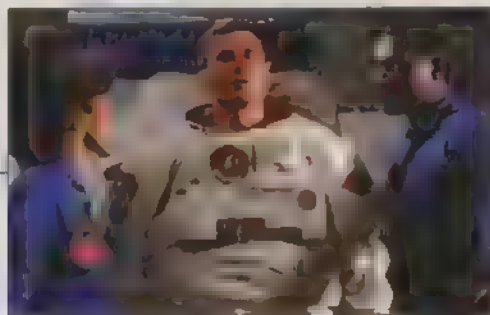
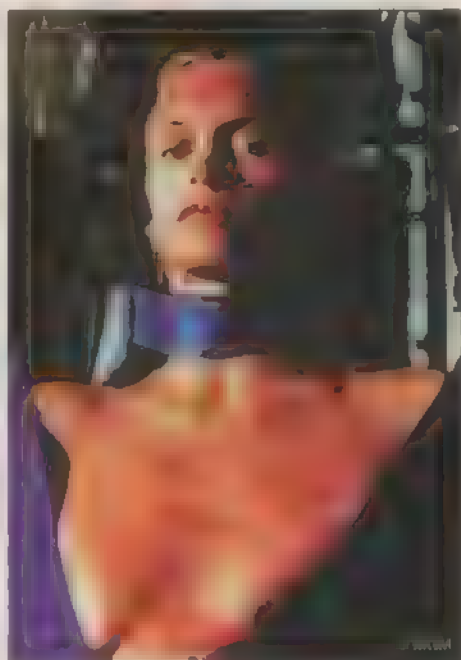
begins to look bleak.

Much of *Species'* sexually charged and gory formula is recycled for *Species 2*. As a character admits in the flick, "This isn't the E—ing X-Files." So if you're looking for something more cerebral than a kill-anything-that-slugs monsterfest, this won't be your cup of bloody tea. Like the first installment, *Species 2* leans more heavily toward horror than science fiction, so there are also a lot of ancillary characters to keep audiences guessing who eventually will become mince meat. And the movie won't disappoint gorehounds: At times

the action is gloriously gory.

Unfortunately, the movie seriously crashes at the end when it strains to set the stage for yet another sequel. While you'll find more bang for the buck than most sequels, there's really nothing new to see here.

★★★☆☆ — Mike Stokes



The *Newton Boys* (Fox) is a sweet-tempered period piece about four genial brothers who became the most prolific bank robbers in American history. It's a far cry from the bloody rampages of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Long Riders*, and, unlike those gritty predecessors, this movie remains faithful to the true-life story except for one point: It's doubtful the real Newtons were as comely as the actors who portray them—Matthew McConaughey, Ethan Hawke, Skeet Ulrich and Vincent D'Onofrio.

The story opens in 1919 Texas, as Willis Newton (McConaughey) enlists his brothers in an innovative scheme—nighttime robberies where they and a jumpy nitroglycerin expert (Dwight Yoakam) blow up safes, take the money and run. Bankrolled by the unauthorized withdrawals, the Newtons live large until the safes get harder to crack and they become embroiled in an ill-fated mail-train robbery.

Director Richard Linklater takes a break from the suburbia he's chronicled in *Slacker* and

Dazed and Confused to effortlessly recreate the Roaring Twenties and choreograph some nice heist scenes. Unfortunately, he has trouble telling a compelling story—subplots involving a failed oil venture and Willis' romance with a headstrong single mom (ER's Julianna Margulies) are dull, and there's hardly any dramatic conflict. Still, the movie is so good-natured that the lapses in excitement are forgivable. The

brothers seem genuinely caring; the period detail is perfect and the rollicking soundtrack (performed by Texas bluegrass trio The Bad Livers) is infectious. Sure, shoot 'em-ups might have spiced things up, but they probably wouldn't have done the real Newton boys any justice.

★★★☆☆ — Annabelle Villanueva



BROTHER Hoods

Mung

FOOD

Jackie Chan is a great movie star, but he was born for video. Like his analog in the world of sports, Michael Jordan, he can't be truly appreciated without instant replay. In a movie theater, his best moves fly right by, leaving time only for a quick "Did he do what I think he just did?" laugh before he's on to the next bit of business. But the blessed rewind and pause buttons let video viewers savor Chan's awe-inspiring numbness to the extent they deserve.

Keeping that in mind, the best way to judge a Jackie Chan movie is to count up the number of rewindings it demands. *Mr. Nice Guy* (New Line), the latest Chan outing to hit video stores, has more than a dozen rewind-worthy moments, making it his most entertaining outing since *Rumble in the Bronx*.

In *Mr. Nice Guy*, Chan plays, as always, a sweet

Of course, it doesn't take long for the need to arise. After a spunky journalist switches a videotape of a drug deal with a tape of one of Jackie's cooking shows, Jackie finds himself on



the run from gang members and maha goons.

Director Sammo Hung, who directed and co-starred with Chan in *Meals on Wheels* and *Dragons Forever*, has obviously mastered the fine art of capturing Chan's slapstick fights on film. But though the action scenes deserve a five-star rating



natured guy whom friends and drug lords alike call "Jackie." The only difference this time is Chan isn't a sweet-natured cop; he's a sweet-natured TV chef. But Jackie's no push-over. When the need arises, he's an ass-kicking karate ace.

truly atrocious acting—and the final result falls far short of being a cinema classic. Nevertheless, Chan fans will wear out their remote controls enjoying and re-enjoying *Mr. Nice Guy*'s ample charms.

★★★★☆—S.H.

DVD

ROUNDUP

by Edward Gross

Jackie Chan may be kicking plenty of ass, but even Mr. Chan cannot come up with the most exciting

much—viewers can simply relish the truly awe-inspiring fight sequences.

Naturally, the DVD has bonus features, among them

three minutes of excised footage; an amusing featurette on the making of the film; a fascinating documentary called *Brave Heart to His Own World*, which brings the viewer closer to the real man behind the action star's public persona; and, best of

all, a commentary from Chan and producer Michael Fain and producer Paul Heller. It's especially amusing to hear Heller admit that Chan's performance in *Mr. Nice Guy* is "the best I've ever seen."

Chan's performance in *Mr. Nice Guy* is "the best I've ever seen."

Chan's performance in *Mr. Nice Guy* is "the best I've ever seen."

Chan's performance in *Mr. Nice Guy* is "the best I've ever seen."



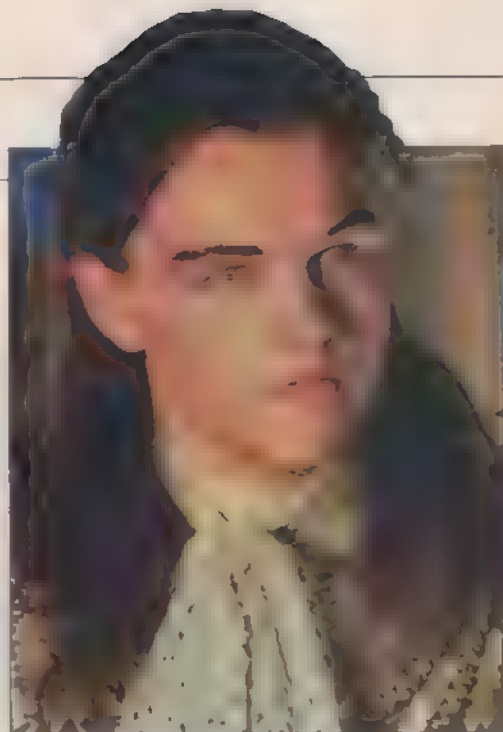
Chan's performance in *Mr. Nice Guy* is "the best I've ever seen."



A weighty ensemble cast does not, necessarily, a meaty first-rate film make. Case in point—Randall Wallace's update of Alexandre Dumas' classic novel *The Man in the Iron Mask*. Despite the considerable talents of leading men John Malkovich, Jeremy Irons, Gérard Depardieu and Gabriel Byrne, the film suffers from a disjointed narrative characterized more by superficially enjoyable melodrama than well-conceived high adventure. In other words: It looks good, but, as they say, looks aren't everything.

In 17th century France, the

legendary Musketeers come out of retirement to depose the vain King Louis XIV (Leonardo DiCaprio) in favor of his long lost twin brother (the title character, also played by DiCaprio whom Louis imprisoned to protect his right to the throne). The storyline has undeniable silver screen potential, and this adaptation has plenty of authentic-looking period costumes and European courtyards. But without a tightly woven screenplay replete with swashbuckling and real drama, the film can't do justice to the classic on which it's based.



Instead, director Wallace (the writer who brought *Braveheart* to Academy Award acclaim) stumbles his way through the jumpy, unorganized film, which is surprisingly lacking in swordplay. The poor pacing can be attributed partially to the attention he lavishes on the characters

except that the stilted script penned by the director himself, never offers any real insights into the Musketeers' lives. Nevertheless, it's the classic characters' camaraderie that gives the film enough shining moments to make it at least somewhat entertaining.

★★★★☆ —Gina McIntyre

DOUBLE Trouble

BACK WESTWORLD



Michael Crichton's obsession with technology run amuck has become familiar territory since 1993, when his dangerous dinosaurs began munching scientists in *Jurassic Park*. But 20 years earlier, he was examining the same themes more adeptly in a different kind of

amusement park—*Westworld*. The *Westworld* resort offers guests the chance to enjoy the outlaw spirit of the wild, wild west in an atmosphere of absolute authenticity. Amazingly realistic robots walk, talk and do all sorts of other things just like humans under the watchful eye of a team of crack scientists who carefully monitor their activity from an underground command center. Unfortunately, the technicians are a little too good at their jobs: The robots soon start thinking for themselves. And given their skills in brawling and gun-play, things don't bode well for vacationers. In particular, pals Peter (Martin) (Richard Benjamin) and

John Blane (James Brolin) run into trouble with one lean, mean cowboy machine, played to the hilt by Yul Brynner. Brynner's robot has it in for



Benjamin and relentlessly pursues him across the park. One viewing of *Westworld* (MGM) clears up any questions about where James Cameron found his inspiration for *The Terminator*. Even after all these years, Brynner's silent but deadly cowboy killer could give Arnold's cyborg a run for his guns. But *Westworld* is more than just "robot villain chases human good guy." Instead, writer/director Crichton uses his premise to comment on the potentially deadly ramifications of man's love affair with technology. His admonitions against blind faith in science have never been so powerful.

★★★★☆ —G.M.

Video

Star

WRECK

For about seven minutes, *Lost in Space* (New Line) is everything it should be: hyper, hilarious and jubilantly goofy. Unfortunately, those few precious moments of entertainment come during the closing credits, which roll up the screen accompanied by a pounding mix of techno/house grooves. The sudden hyperspace leap into the Disco Zone is at odds with the preceding film—a tedious, unnerving and ultimately infuriating gauntlet of weak special effects,

Though the *Lost in Space* movie eschews camp in favor of straightforward sci-fi thrills and chills, in the right hands this approach could've been fun. But the producers made a critical error when they placed their franchise hopes in the fumbling mitts of screenwriter Akiva Goldsman. Having demonstrated that he can't write camp with the disastrous *Batman & Robin*, Goldsman proves equally inept when he's going all out to avoid camp.

The plot is so simple it seems fool-proof. The Robinson clan blasts off into space on a mission of interstellar exploration. They get lost. Adventure ensues. But Goldsman saddles the Robinsons with so many gratuitous dysfunctional ticks and dollops of insipid dialogue ("I guess sometimes friendship means listening to your heart, not your head" young Will tells

his robot pal at one point) it's impossible to like a single member of the family.

Even with the baggage of a lousy script, *Lost in Space* might still have eked out some entertainment if the FX had been cool. But the CGI spaceships and monsters are just passable, and the less said about the cringe-inducing space monkey, the better.

Lost in Space does at least accomplish one impressive feat. It makes you long for the dumb, pointless, yet

always amusing original
★☆☆☆ **SH**



annoying characters and cretinous dialogue—that it sparks the only genuine amusement to be gleaned from the whole hellish experience.

It didn't have to be so. Sure, *Lost in Space* was one of the dumbest shows ever to grace the airwaves, but you've got to give it points for style. What other sci-fi series would turn a prissy, mincing space bitch like Dr. Zachary Smith into one of its heroes? And the plots—about rebellious vegetables and interstellar beauty contests—explored sci-fi's looper comic possibilities years before *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Men in Black*.



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You Only Live Twice

Game developers resurrect three box-office disappointments

by annabelle villanueva

When a movie's a hit, the games will follow—*Star Wars*, *Die Hard*, *Terminator*, *Mission: Impossible* and countless other blockbuster franchises have been translated to consoles, arcades or PCs. But when games are developed from films that flatline at the box office, often a risk because the product frequently is being designed before the movie is released—it's harder for gamers to get excited.

Or is it? In

movie to do as well as it possibly can," says Simon Pfinch, producer of *Starship Troopers*. "But we have the philosophy that this better be a good game regardless of whether it's called *Starship Troopers* or anything else. There have been plenty

will take as much from Robert Heinlein's acclaimed novel as from the film itself. A third-person action game from MicroProse, *Starship Troopers* takes place a few years after Paul Verhoeven's flick ended. Players

engage in action as a 3-D animated trooper in the mobile infantry who tries to push back the bug invasion using high-powered battle armor outlined by Heinlein.

"The movie on its own would not have made a very good game—it would have made a very short game. You'll remem-

ber the guys went down, got eaten and that was it," the producer says. "But combining the movie and the book did make a good game."

Pfinch says that the bugs' behavior and design is taken from the film, while the storyline comes from the book.

Unlike other action games where the idea is to kill even monster, that's simply not [possible here], because there are thousands and thousands of bugs coming at you," he adds.

Fox Interactive is releasing another type of extraterrestrial invasion—the acid-blooded nasties of *Alien Resurrection*. The game is a *Tomb Raider*-style ven-



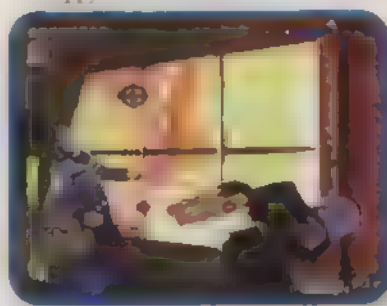
of really good movies [with licensed games that have been atrocious, and there've been plenty of really bad movies that have had good games done from them].

Science-fiction fans who panned the movie should be happy to know that Pfinch's team

the coming months, a trio of developers will try to mine gaming gold from Hollywood dross. PC versions of *Starship Troopers*, *Alien Resurrection* and *Judge Dredd* are poised to pick up where their silver-screen predecessors left off.

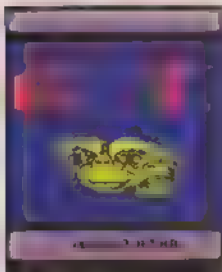
Yet designers know that the shadow of their precursors' disappointing box-office performances could loom over them.

"Obviously, we would like the



Extra Terrible

Just because a movie's a hit doesn't mean the game will be, too. The legendarily awful E.T. game nearly bankrupted Atari.



ture with the cloned Ellen Ripley (and friends) standing in for Lara Croft. The game, which borrows from the film, taking ideas directly from the movie's production design, weapons design and costumes. Looking to capture some of the movie's mature audience, Fox Interactive spices the game with

Sylvester Stallone's, well, dreadful 1995 film. Eventually someone stumbled across the archived designs and suggested bringing back the game.

"Someone [pointed] out, 'People will think it's based on the film!'" says Gremlin's Steven Zalud, who stresses that the game in fact evolved from



some off-color language and plenty of blood (and acid spurting around). The environment is highly destructible, giving players (who can choose to be Ripley, Call, Johnnie D'Stephano or Christie) the ability to blast through just about any room and surface.

While the *Alien* franchise still has a lot of respectability

the popular comic-book version of *Dredd*. But someone else would say, "It would be a good game, and wasn't the film long enough ago?"

Eventually, the arguments for the game won out. Described as an "action-packed shootfest with a strong dose of humor, the game relies on

shooting, shooting and some more shooting as it follows Dredd's quest to stop a mad bomber. "We concentrated on relentless, unforgiving action," Zalud says.

In the end, every designer who's had to build

a game from a disappointing movie has the same wish. "We hoped with a good game and a fine story and some damn fine graphics, the film could be ignored," Zalud concludes. ♦

and appears to be pushing forward despite *Alien Resurrection's* lukewarm reception), *Judge Dredd* doesn't. The London-based Gremlin Group began designing a *Judge Dredd* shooter years before the film was released, only to find themselves shelving the plan after

Movies

FANFICTION

Fan websites thrive on the Internet's open forums and seem to multiply faster than rabbits. Each issue, CINESCAPE will weed through the thousands of fan pages to find the worthwhile online game.

GUNNACE

Gunnace has captured the minds of many online denizens with an interesting collection of pages covering an array of topics such as fan contributions to fictional storylines in the "Story-board," box-office predictions and an assortment of Web contributors that provide an interesting (if somewhat inconsistent) cross-section of the Net. (www.gunnace.com)

FANFIK.COM

Fanfik is an above-average fan-fiction site specializing in

Star Wars. Visitors can submit their own Wars adventures, mixing and matching the franchise's classic characters. Or they can check out what other fans have done. There's a multitude of entries.

Downloads are zipped and easy to access, and the stories run the gamut of Wars themes. (www.fanfik.com)

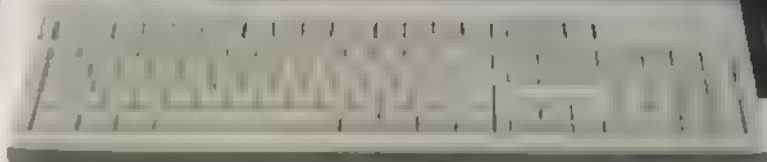
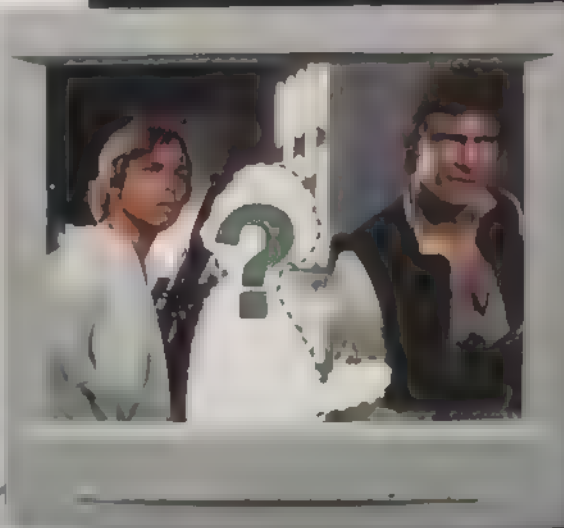
JAWAD'S STEVEN SPIELBERG PAGE

Jawad's page may be a bit short on packaging (don't look for any Shockwave files here), but it boasts an impressive collection of all things related to the director of *Indiana Jones*, *Jurassic Park* and *E.T.*, including upcoming projects from DreamWorks and Amblin. A solid site from one of the most dedicated info-collectors on the Web. (count)

don.bl.com/spielberg/

If you have a website that you'd like considered for this column, please send your name and website URL to: LowtekSH@msn.com.

—Steve Harris





Prose and Cons

The dazzle of summer's FX blockbusters doesn't translate to the printed page

by elle macorkle

Why read the book when you can see the movie? That question always annoys pretentious bibliophiles like me—I've read *A Passage to India*, *A Thousand Acres*, *The Name of the Rose*, *War and Peace* (three times) and other literary classics without ever seeing their cinematic adaptations (O.K., I haven't really read *The Name of the Rose*, but I did check it out of the library once).

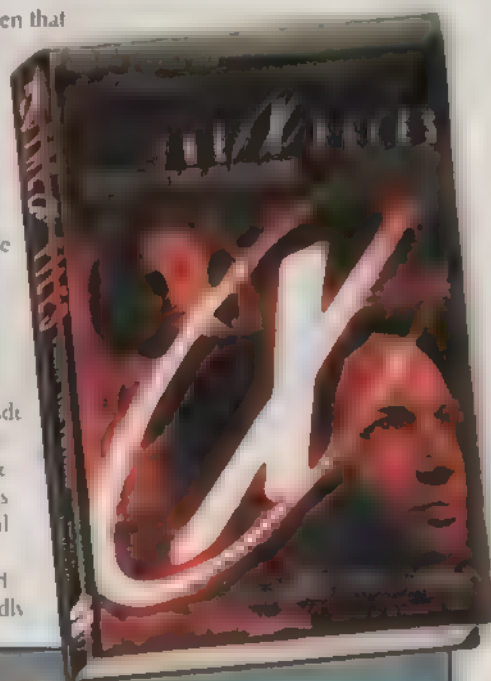
Novels can take their time developing characters, interweaving plots and setting up a backstory while enjoying the unlimited budget, sets and spectacular special effects provided by the imagination. While I love movies, the printed page seemed to have such an advantage over film, particularly in the lights-and-magic world of science fiction, that I never thought Hollywood could compare.

Until now. You see, I've found that although books often are better than motion pictures, reading novelizations—those thin tomes adapted from movies with a lobby poster slapped on the cover—will probably make you wish you were illiterate or, at the very least, spark an uncontrollable urge to go to the cinema instead.

Case in point: the novelizations of *The X-Files*, *Armageddon* and *Godzilla*, this summer's crop of event films. All three movies were relative box-office disappointments, so it's reasonable to assume that each writer had plenty of room for improvement. *The X-Files* book (HarperPrism, \$23) seems to

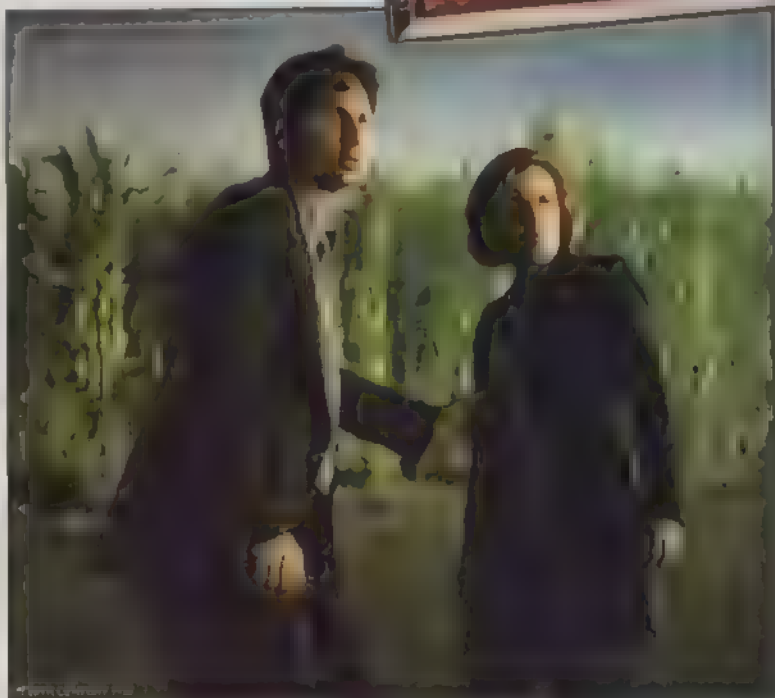
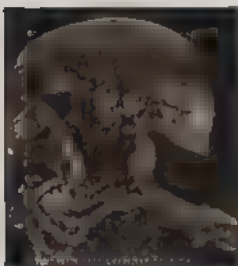
be the most promising, given that it was adapted by Nebula Award-winning author Elizabeth Hand, although, in a funny bit of pretense, the book jacket stipulates that the work is "by Chris Carter." Hand's brittle, precise prose jumps out from the volume's huge print with an efficiency well-suited to Mulder and Scully's measured FBI demeanor.

But Hand doesn't provide much beyond professional gloss. The book follows the movie so rigorously, it adds little to the source material and frustratingly fails to improve on the film's shortcomings. The agents blandly



Novel Ideas

Not every novelization is a turkey, especially when noted SF writers wield the pen. Alan Dean Foster's adaptation of *Alien* is considered an impressive work in its own right, as is Orson Scott Card's take on *The Abyss*.





move from the Dallas building explosion to Washington, D.C., to Antarctica with all the excitement of David Duchovny's monotone voice. While it was virtually impossible for Carter to skillfully recap the series' complex conspiracy mythology and provide detailed character background in a two-hour movie, Hand has plenty of opportunities to clearly explain the Syndicate's plan; properly introduce the Cigarette-Smoking Man and his importance in Mulder's quest; divulge information about Scully's medical past, her alien abduction and her pairing with Mulder; and properly flesh out the movie's quick allusion to the abduction of Mulder's sister and his father's possible role in the conspiracy.

Instead, the novelization never even bothers to explain what an X-File is. During a scene in Mulder's hospital room, the Lone Gunmen randomly pop up and then just as suddenly disappear from the story. The same sequence bewildered many non-X-Files who watched the film and couldn't figure out why the hell those three geeks were at Mulder's bedside. Their unexplained presence is even more unforgivable in the book.

Of course, most readers probably are too busy skipping to the scene where Hand does add a little detail—Mulder and Scully's near kiss. Still, it's pretty unsatisfying stuff, sounding a bit like a paranormal Harlequin romance: "His hands tightened on her, his head dipped as he drew her toward him, his fingers

moved upward to trace the long line of her neck, her skin warm beneath the thick mane of auburn hair, her cheek. For only an instant she hesitated, then reached for him. She could feel his mouth grazing her, when—"

Yet *The X-Files* reads like poetry when compared to M.C. Bolin's treatment of *Armageddon* (Hyperion, \$4.99).

Like its cinematic inspiration, Bolin's killer asteroid story sometimes wrings guilty entertainment from the silliness of its macho-man jingoism and testosterone-drenched swagger. The book's full of lines like, "I've seen you do stuff that would make Neil Armstrong piss his spacesuit." At least Bolin tries to have fun with the story, although the movie's truckload of one-liners and one-dimensional characters fall flat when translated to the page. Plus, there's no real drama or tension—the reader never gets the feeling that Earth is about to be obliterated.

Unfortunately, Bolin also skimps on scenic description. He doesn't clearly evoke the comet's terrifying environment or the destructive New York asteroid shower seen near the opening of the movie, one of the most eye-popping special-effects sequences in recent memory.

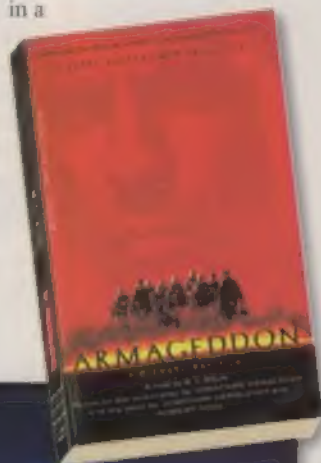
Bolin also makes the irritating choice to keep every scene in the order that it appears in the film, no matter how small or disruptive it is to his narrative flow. However, one short pas-

sage is notable—the meeting between Harry Stamper (Bruce Willis' character) and his oil driller father, a scene eventually edited from the film's final cut.

Still, both *Armageddon* and *The X-Files* could be passable scans for people who loved those movies and who enjoy extraordinarily light reading. Besides, the two films themselves were fairly entertaining, so there's no real harm done. However, *Godzilla* is another story, as writer Stephen Molstad somehow manages to crank out 314 pages from Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich's puerile script. (Neither *The X-Files* nor *Armageddon* novelizations are longer than 180 pages.) If that weren't enough, Molstad must have suffered a head injury early in his writing process. That's the only logical explanation for his decision to write the story in the first-person point of view of Nick Tatopoulos, the extremely grating nerd who Matthew Broderick brought to life on the big screen.

never watched sumo [wrestling] yourself, you should. It's actually a very graceful and exciting sport." Or: "One look at the withered, diseased landscape surrounding the Chernobyl site is enough to convince any sane, impartial observer that...clearly, we are not ready, technologically or intellectually, to be using this method of power generation." And that's before page 20.

Then there's Nick's ramblings about his old flame Audrey and Molstad's means to explain how Nick can describe scenes that took place outside his presence. (He either sees it in a



And it goes downhill from there. Molstad has Tatopoulos constantly take off on idiotic, pseudo-profound tangents that ostensibly help establish how geeky he is. These succeed in being so annoying that even the gentlest of readers will start praying for the book to diverge from the script so *Godzilla* can swallow the scientist whole. Some samples of Nick's wit: "If you've

dream, watches a videotaped account or just describes away in third-person without letting on how he knows this stuff.) I gave up halfway through the book, somewhere around the point where we read Nick's insightful description of the lizard: "It was huge."

Why read the book when you can see the movie? My thoughts exactly. ♦

Broadcast Blues

Ever wonder why the Sci-Fi Channel is so lame?

by mark a. altman



A few years back, Bruce Springsteen had some success crooning "57 Channels (And Nothin' On.)." Years later, The Boss' lyrics are still all too true. Flip through your basic cable channels and you'll find plenty of choices—almost all of them bad. Nowhere has this become more apparent to me than on the Sci-Fi Channel.

Ironically, the Sci-Fi Channel was a station I desperately coveted for years. It seemed every cable system but mine had it, and I wanted my SF-TV!

However, when I finally got it, I soon realized all it had to offer was '70s and '80s sci-fi dreck, the occasional cheapie news show and really bad genre movies that couldn't get theatrical release—all geared for a completely mainstream audience...or at least fans of *Full House*.

Now, I admit that the channel was faced with some daunting obstacles: The sci-fi fanbase is a small demographic to target while trying to achieve any kind of meaningful commercial success. And there are many types of sci-fi fans: those that only like genre movies and TV, others that only read SF books and, beyond that, wackos like the filksingers. Bringing this diverse collection of people together makes the Middle East peace process pale in comparison. But I'm still not willing to give the Sci-Fi Channel an A for effort. *seaQuest DSV* reruns do not a science-fiction network make.

About a year ago, I was interviewed by a marketing firm hired by the Sci-Fi Channel to target their audience demographic. I proceeded to rattle off a litany of my problems with the channel, making myriad suggestions: more interactive and immersive series and documentaries featuring SF authors; a debate forum like the late, great "War Room" segment on *SF Vortex*; new wrap-arounds for reruns that present interviews with the cast and crew of seminal SF series; and

think of when you hear the words science fiction?"

And what did they come up with? The "Ever Wonder" advertising campaign. But what does it mean? Do I ever wonder about what kind of person would watch multiple repeats of *Galactica: 1980* or *V*? Yes, I do.

While I admit that the channel has made some strides of late with



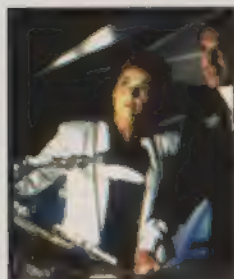
Sci-Fi Entertainment (an *Entertainment Tonight*-style show that covers the genre with appealing hosts Chase Masterson and Scott Mantz) and the forthcoming exclusive run of the uncut, original *Star Trek* featuring newly shot interstitial segments, they have a long way to go in fulfilling their early promise as well as their own marketing mantra: Ever Wonder?

Keep wondering.

MARK A. ALTMAN is the author of *Trek Navigator* with Edward Gross (Little Brown & Company) and writer/producer of the upcoming feature film *Free Enterprise* (starring William Shatner), which will be released in theaters this winter. ♦

Sea Sick

The Sci-Fi Channel airs one episode of *seaQuest DSV* twice each day. At that rate, you can catch the series in its entirety every three months—only 58 episodes were ever made.



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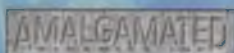
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